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JOHN STANLEY

The Sociology of Virtue: The Political and Social Theories of Georges Sorel
387pp. University of California Press.
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Georges Sorel was born in Cherbourg, three months before the revolution of February 1848 brought about the first of several violent political changes that he witnessed only from afar. He came of solid Norman middle-class stock, Catholic and monarchist; his mother was the daughter of a mayor of Basseux, his father a businessman, compulsively honest and only intermittently successful. A first cousin, Albert Sorel, the historian and eventually President of the Third Republic's Senate, would earn a place in the fourth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which, in 1924, paid no attention to Georges.

The blue-eyed, ruddy youth proved a *far-outher*: he graduated with distinction from the Collège de Cherbourg (1864) from the Ecole Polytechnique (1867), which his two brothers also attended, and finally from the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées (1870), just in time to spend the period of the Franco-Prussian war in Corsica. His career as an engineer was smooth and successful, his last thirteen years at Perpignan whence he retired in 1892 - with the Legion of Honour, which he wore for the rest of his life - to buy a small house in Boulogne-sur-Seine, a convenient omnibus ride from the libraries and lecture-halls of the Left Bank. He was forty-five, he had enough money to subsist modestly until his death (in 1923), and he was happily joined to a woman whom he loved very much and whose death in 1897 would leave this lonely man truly bereft. He could henceforth devote himself to what a late letter to Benedetto Croce describes as the great concern of his life: "the historical genesis of morals".

This is the aspect of his work which John Stanley discusses clearly and cogently in a study that leads us from Sorel's earliest writings to his last, arguing for a consistency of motive and interest which other students of the man have inclined to deny. Much of Stanley's organization is reminiscent of the important 1962 study by Georges Gorioli, *Le Pluralisme dramatique de*

Georges Sorel; but Gorioli, displeased with his subject's later vagabondages, ended his book with the *Reflections on Violence* when Sorel still had fourteen years to live. Stanley carries through to the end, and his contribution is the richer for it. On the other hand, Stanley, like most of those who have tackled this complex man, shows little interest in relating the theories - to which he does handsome justice - to the experience that generated them, other than intellectual; or the world in which they were supposed to fit.

He devotes nine lines to the woman, probably the only woman, Sorel loved, the companion of 22 years of work, to whom he dedicated two books, including the *Reflections on Violence*, yet whom he never married. Pierre Andreu, to whom we all refer for information, tells us that Sorel's parents would not countenance his marriage to this Marie David, the daughter of poor peasants, a factory worker, then maid in a Lyon hotel, where she nursed an ailing Sorel to recovery and a common-law marriage. We do not know what secret reticence or promise kept him from wedding her after his father's death in 1879, or his mother's death in 1887, which left him the small income that made him independent. But it is not beside the point that he sometimes used her name as a pseudonym, that (as Stanley mentions) she inspired his work; that (as he does not) Sorel said he "worked to raise a philosophical monument worthy of her memory"; and that - as he once reflected - "it is thus that our intellectual life depends in large part on the chance of a meeting".

Stanley could also have mentioned - but it is not his purpose - that the reaffirmation of morals, and hence, their analysis, was very much *à la mode* when Sorel's first attacks on intellectuals and on the ambient decadence were published in 1889. Images of political opportunism and corruption run thick and fast through Sorel's pages, as through the contemporary press: the political industry, the mafia, Tammany Hall, politico-criminal associations, and so on, are denounced with a virulence worthy of Karl Marx. Decadence - social, moral - increasingly fashionable since the 1820s, had figured prominently on the national agenda since the defeat of 1871. Its manifestations may have appeared particularly striking in the 1880s (Le

Déclatant itself appeared in April 1886, and the secularist, scientific pretensions of those who try to found a social science. In *The Trial of Socrates* (1889) he attacks intellectual pretensions of superiority, apparently confirmed by the prestige of "Science". Why Socrates? Because for Socrates "these who know" carry a spark of the divine that sets them apart from and above the mediocre mass. Such alleged superiority makes democracy impossible, justifies oligarchy based on sophistry and artifice, and discourages high performance among common people. Socrates' pretension to "science" was more impressive and more politically effective than claims based only on the relativist rhetoric of the sophists, and the arrogance of Socrates' followers anticipated the worst form of government: a union of philosophers and politicians, in which those who can afford to buy expertise share power with those able to acquire it, and science becomes not a method of knowledge but a recipe for gaining particular advantages. A government of shopkeepers and academics is worse than a government of sophists, because it fosters sophistry with principle. If philosophy is about theory, power is about practice. As professional politicians encouraged by "principle" become more arbitrary, philosophers innocent of practical life become more utopian, less open to other opinions; along with a sense of reality, freedom itself seeps away. But - Sorel liked to quote Vico - man knows only what he makes. When thought is abstracted from reality, politics loses its moral roots because its discourse then is based, and turns upon, abstractions.



Georges Sorel

Some, like Ernest Renan, reacted to an impression of liveliness, irresponsibility and immorality by a kind of quietism and refusal of social responsibility: "France is dying. Do not trouble her agony." Others, like Emile Durkheim, insisted rather on "the ties that unite men" and affirm their solidarity. It was these ties and these dynamic forces that Sorel sought to identify, the criteria of a moral order which could combine traditional virtues and modern productivity. Sorel's first writings, then, are about

- and against - Renan and Durkheim, and the secularist, scientific pretensions of those who try to found a social science. In *The Trial of Socrates* (1889) he attacks intellectual pretensions of superiority, apparently confirmed by the prestige of "Science". Why Socrates? Because for Socrates "these who know" carry a spark of the divine that sets them apart from and above the mediocre mass. Such alleged superiority makes democracy impossible, justifies oligarchy based on sophistry and artifice, and discourages high performance among common people. Socrates' pretension to "science" was more impressive and more politically effective than claims based only on the relativist rhetoric of the sophists, and the arrogance of Socrates' followers anticipated the worst form of government: a union of philosophers and politicians, in which those who can afford to buy expertise share power with those able to acquire it, and science becomes not a method of knowledge but a recipe for gaining particular advantages. A government of shopkeepers and academics is worse than a government of sophists, because it fosters sophistry with principle. If philosophy is about theory, power is about practice. As professional politicians encouraged by "principle" become more arbitrary, philosophers innocent of practical life become more utopian, less open to other opinions; along with a sense of reality, freedom itself seeps away. But - Sorel liked to quote Vico - man knows only what he makes. When thought is abstracted from reality, politics loses its moral roots because its discourse then is based, and turns upon, abstractions.

A social morality that is not lived, a morality that has to be taught, will not hold. Morals that have to be argued, can also be argued away. The Sophists had disturbed traditional authorities and acceptances. Socrates, trying to restore these, weakened them further. His dialectical method could lead to questioning everything, not least the classic virtues and legitimacies, hence to an absence of moral certitude and, with the loss of certitude, the principle of legitimacy disappears from law itself.

Before Socrates, virtue was born of experience. Man in his productive household, or in defence of his polis, discovered "his own best qualities": courage, patience, disregard of death, devotion to glory, and the good of his

fellows, in one word, his virtues. Abstract intellectual constructs have nothing to do with virtue, which is integral to the productive life. No virtue grows from abstractions, no social heroism from bureaucratic institutions. Only producers can run a society where production takes place; for productivity suggests the action appropriate to it, in which a man can discover - and can forge - his virtue.

The essay, written in the mid-1880s, is interesting, but roughly cobbled together. Sorel later confessed to Croce that he found *Le Procès* "composed in the provinces", poorly documented, vague on lots of points, and not to be republished. But it contains most of Sorel's major themes, reflects his critical strength, and also his style: vituperative, relentless and dour, with little care for charm or readability.

It has been suggested that, as a *polytechnicien*, Sorel would be unsympathetic to the professional intellectuals that the Sorbonne and the Ecole Normale produced. But his abhorrence of abstraction extended to the rationalist tradition of the School itself: its Cartesian way of looking at the world in terms of mathematical laws on whose understanding reason, order and authority were based; its Communist fondness for the elaborate technoscientific models; Comte had described as positive philosophies; its aspiration to organize society by "science": a social physics; that, in Sorel's view, led only to mandarinism and stultification.

Sorel found Descartes brilliantly reductionist: his creation "artificial", hence superficial; his heritage better suited to conversation than to scientific study: "a good intellect familiar with Cartesian reasoning could find an answer to anything". Mathematics leads to explanations which reduce all phenomena to general, universal laws, obscuring the particulars that are reality. Total explanations lead to would-be total societies and political systems.

As his second published essay (1887) testifies, Sorel preferred the probabilist approach of Cournot, for whom theories were simply convenient devices whose inherent truth was dubious and, really, irrelevant; and that of J.-H. Poincaré, the mathematician, who looked on scientific theories as useful concepts -

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241pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £7.95.
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In 1955, a sixteen-year-old English boy, whose stepfather had just taken up a teaching post in Johannesburg, drifted out into the African bush armed with a pocket-knife and a bagful of salt (which, he knew from H. M. Stanley's writings, might be useful for trading). At first the local people took pity on the "feral" (deranged) white adolescent, and left pawpaws and eggs in his path. Later, he learnt to cope: to trap rock hyraxes, steal prey from the big cats, eat caterpillars as the tribesmen did. Still later, he discovered he had a gift for handling snakes – and thenceforth supported himself by selling their venom to Johannesburg laboratories. The local Africans, to whom all snakes were associated with the cosmic Giant Serpent, became convinced that he had special spiritual gifts and named him Rudinoga, Father of Snakes.

Seven years later, Rudinoga walked into Professor Raymond Dart's workroom at the University of Witwatersrand, and obligingly produced evidence (in the form of a ritually-made bone knife) for a surviving osteodontic culture of just the kind Dart himself had postulated at the Third African Congress of Prehistory in 1955. Dart was, naturally, enchanted; offered the odd young man advice and reading-lists; even found a little money from a charitable trust, and sent Adrian Boshier out on his travels again.

Among the Northern Sotho tribesmen, Rudinoga continued to prosper exceedingly. Not only was he the Father of Snakes: he also had – like Julius Caesar, like Dostoevsky – the "sacred disease", epilepsy, clearly showing him to be possessed by spirits. To Boshier it came as a surprise that the embarrassing fits he had fought so hard to suppress should, in a different cultural context, be a source of honour, power and spiritual prestige. But being singled out by the spirits implied, he found, a definite vocation: he must

submit himself to them, seek training as a diviner and complete the initiation which, in the eyes of the tribesmen, had already been set in motion by epilepsy and the handling of snakes. The seeking of esoteric knowledge – formerly seen as a threatening, white man's intrusion – was now regarded as his proper business; he was sent up into the Makgabat mountains to learn more (and after the next epileptic attack) apprenticed to the old priestess of the caves.

Boshier, understandably, seems to have done his utmost to resist: he had fought epilepsy all his life, must he now succumb to mumbo-jumbo? But the cavea he had found in the mountains were alive with rock paintings and, the next time he went back to Johannesburg to report to Dart, he met that other and more celebrated cultural anthropologist, the Zulu driver and writer Credo Mutwa. Mutwa, taken up into the caves, "read" the paintings with his usual confidence – and the younger man was encouraged to continue on the curious path life seemed to have mapped out for him. He was duly initiated; discovered further caves; found in one of them a "herd" of sacred drums abandoned and totting; got the tribesmen to restore and reconsecrate them; set up a highly successful rainmaking ceremony; and, in 1978 – by then worn out by increasingly frequent epileptic attacks – was dragged up dead from the Indian Ocean. Only then, from the dimrics and notes he had left behind, did his white contemporaries realize he had been an epileptic.

We are not told what stories are related, among the different groups of Northern Sotho, about the Father of Snakes who brought back the sacred drums and made rain come at last. On the other side of the cultural divide, however, Boshier's life can be clearly seen to have all the makings of myth; a Rider Haggard, a Laurens van der Post would envy Lyall Watson his material. The sixteen-year-old who originally hitch-hiked into the countryside outside Johannesburg – the arrogant, honky youth who wandered into Dart's work-room – the author of some dozen-and-a-half specialized articles in various South African journals – these come to be seen, in the end, as only the more prosaic avatars of a shadowy, universal hero-figure: one who undertook strange journeys, was

initiated into forbidden secrets and in the end swallowed up into the unplumbed, estranging sea. White South Africa too has its mythographers, of whom Lyall Watson is one of the most eminent.

Some form of Jungian "machinery" is almost as obligatory for this genre as the Olympian variety for classical epic; and Watson's is peculiarly neat and beguiling. It consists of four "divining bones", carved on one side only with traditional abstract motifs and representing, we are told, the Old Men, the Old Women, the Youth and the Maiden. The significance, for Boshier's story, of the Maiden is perhaps a little unclear; but the carved motifs appear, to various combinations, as chapter headings, and the reader can have fun working out their appositiveness, in each particular case, to the subject-matter. (It must have been tempting, too, to extrapolate from the sixteen possible "throws" of the divining-bones to the sixteen principal configurations of the better-known West African divinatory system of Ifa; but, if Watson was aware of the temptation, he has wisely resisted it.)

Now, you either quite enjoy this sort of thing, or you loathe it. To be fair, *Lightning Bird* is not presented as a work of scholarship; there is an index and a bibliography of Boshier's own publications, but no map, no footnotes and no more general list of references to back up Watson's more sweeping generalizations about nature and culture. There are a good many unsubstantiated assertions of a kind particularly distressing to specialists: Sotho country is throughout equated with an undifferentiated "Africa" and the beliefs and customs of its people with the workings of "the prehistoric mind". On the other hand, there are also some sensible remarks, for instance about the highly ethnocentric division of experience implicit in our use of the word "supernatural", which, while particularly welcome in a popular book, are probably also quite useful reminders to the same specialists. The writing is lushly seductive, calculated to raise feelings of discomfort in the authors of most scholarly monographs; but whether, for any given reader, this *biographic* romance will be more fascinating or more enriching is probably, in the last resort, a matter of temperament.

Going innocently

Joseph Hone

ERIC NEWBY

A Traveller's Life
302pp. Collins. £8.95.
0 00 21874 2

Though he denies the intention, Eric Newby has written an autobiography purely in terms of his travels. From a nightmare trip as a baby round the less salubrious parts of Barnes in 1920, through the *foie gras* filled food-halls of Harrods as a child, to a nervous few days in the Olufsen Hotel from Graham Greene's *The Comedians* in Port-au-Prince – this is a collection of jewelled vignettes: part travel, part life. The only criticism to be made of *A Traveller's Life* is that it lacks the true shape and continuity of a real journey while the episodic nature of the travels doesn't allow for a properly linked or comprehensive account of Newby's own life. The result is an unusual but not entirely satisfying compromise – like a cake with two flavours, both delicious, but not ideal in combination. That said, *A Traveller's Life* is none the less a feast.

Newby has several crucial virtues lacking in more recently acclaimed travel writers. He is brief, seeing the salient points in each event or country. A sharp phrase suffices to describe a landscape – "the atmosphere was inescapably with the brightness of a well-tended gas mantle", and much like a good novelist he works through a few precisely remembered details – the vital factor in people and in places – rather than a complete inventory of the culture and faces. A lot of his effects come between the lines. He gives us the

essence, which informs, but which much more invites us to fill in the picture for ourselves. Thus Newby is one of the few travel writers who makes you want to follow in his footsteps. He offers us all the chance of completing his odyssey – at least in the mind, for one has to add that most of the journeys taken here are to places since ruined or altered out of all recognition.

Newby's world, as described in *A Traveller's Life*, both at home and abroad, sadly no longer exists. A product of the old "middle-middle class", brought up between the wars in a spacious Edwardian service flat by the Thames where there were porters, cooks, chauffeurs and nannies, and where the loudest midday sound was Harrods' van "come to supply the family's every need", Newby remembers a childhood so remote that his travels through it now are like an archaeologist's. He sifts through the shards with objective care. He never sentimentalizes. Instead there are just quotes, verbal photographs, the past suddenly vivid in the remembered brass-bordered windscreen of the Napier car, the sumptuous menu from a picnic on the way to a Devon seaside holiday.

On tongue and Siltion, Huntley & Palmer's Oval Water Biscuits... Ventidellum's Sweet Sliced Mango Chutney... Whiteaway's Dry Devonshire Cider for the grown-ups, and for me lemonade, made at home by Ellen.

And as he travels on – into the shade of the prison bars, through a war in Italy and towards a collection of contemporary tourist horrors – Newby never loses this childhood freshness of

vision, his essential innocence as a traveller. Perhaps this is his greatest gift – and the reason, certainly, behind his resignation from the peripatetic's ideal job, travel editor of *The Observer*. His journeys are not professional – least of all are they made in order to encourage more package tourists, more horrors. Without being elitist, academic or wilfully bizarre, his travels are all extensions of his own haphazard wishes, if not the need to fill in or confirm the details of some childhood book: Arthur Mee's *Children's Colour Book of Lands and Peoples*, for example, or a classic Victorian account of the Court of the Seraglio in Constantinople, which first took him to that city.

Newby travels as if to continue his education and the guide he takes with him is some old tutorial god, as yet unappeased, from his own past. Thus the landscapes here, one-dimensional in so many other travel books, have a real depth, linked as they are to some youthful dream or need. Like many Englishmen before him, Newby is best on his desert journeys – a trip along the rails of the old Hejaz Railway into the memories of Lawrence's Jordan and a visit to St Katharine's monastery in Sinai. And though he travels by car, not camel, his view of these waste places is comparable to Doughty's or Lawrence's – where he gazes out over a wilderness that in part "resembled a huge sheet of coarse sandpaper, in others milk chocolate that had melted and then set again."

Journey through Pakistan (54pp. Bodley Head, £14.95, 0 370 30489 0) by Mohamed Amin, Duncan Willetts and Graham Hancock, a journey along the course of the Indus, with 188 colour illustrations, is to be published next week.



"A thief dressed up as a woman", one of 335 photographs in Weegee's *New York*. Photographs 1935–1960 (388pp. Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 3 921 33 84 3). The pictures, many of them taken in the Depression, convey a vivid impression of New York, from strip-clubs to opera-houses, with the emphasis on nightlife, the underworld and the poor. They are preceded by an autobiographical essay.

Listing heavily

Alan Ross

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Steaming to Bamboola: The World of a Tramp Freighter
222pp. Collins. £7.95.
0 00 21666 8

The crew of the Columbianna, an old freighter sailing out of Charleston and Bremerhaven bound, must rank, on this evidence, as one of the most literary crews in modern times. When the ship rolls, which it does almost permanently, someone is immediately reminded of B. Traven's *Death Ship* – "it was about a doomed freighter cruising these same waters". In the Gulf of Mexico, "a tangerine quarter moon hanging off the stern", the off-duty hands discuss *Apocalypse Now*.

"I think *Heart of Darkness* was better," said Bob Casabel. Casabel knew literature and knife fighting equally well. Conrad and Melville and H. M. Tomlinson are rarely out of someone's thoughts, even if it is only the author's. This is not to be saecrated at; it can happen, even with such an unlikely mob as Christopher Buckley found himself among on the Columbianna. Unfortunately, though we come to know everyone else on board, we do not get to know Buckley at all. He is the absentee author, all-observing but non-existent. His book in consequence, despite its many incidental merits, has a hollow heart. The author relates to no one and the voyage has no narrative pressure.

This is all the more a pity, for in most respects *Steaming to Bamboola* is an impressive addition to the contemporary literature of sea travel. It belongs, properly, on the same shelf as Malcolm Lowry's *Ultramarine*, James Hanley's *Boy* (as also his *The Ocean, Levine, Sallor's Song* among others), and, certainly, Traven.

Buckley may have given nothing away about himself – he is never even addressed by the other members of the crew – but he succeeds in re-creating brilliantly his thoughts, memories and characters. Although ostensibly describing only one transatlantic trip, the book, through reminiscence, takes in the Second World War, Vietnam, the China Seas, the Arctic, the Bay of Bengal, the Caribbean, and most of the exotica as well as hellish places in the world.

Buckley's faintly Dos Passos-like method, while firmly establishing the atmosphere and detail of freighter life, is to let his officers and men simply talk. He is a dab hand at dialogue, and, ghostly though his own presence is, the others really jump off the page. A half-dozen of his characters – all real people, he tells us – stay in the mind long after the Columbianna has set sail on a new voyage, to Puerto Rico, this time without the author.

Buckley is a great one for first diseases, items of equipment, stores, ports visited etc. Here is a typical pamphlet:

Many of America's famous ships have had distinctly American names: *Manhimm*, *Savannah*, *Myaguetz*, *Pueblo*. The CIA's Russian sub-catcher was named *Glorious Explorer*. Richard Henry Dana sailed to California, an almost unknown land, on the brig *Pilgrim*. And came back world wide on the *Alert*. Melville signed on as boy aboard the packet ship *St. Lawrence*, later on the whaler *Acushnet*. *Les Aris*, *Charles* and *Henry* float on the man-of-war *Unicorn*. *Paula* with a trunkful of Hemingway books on the *Molayan Mail*. *Hart Crane* committed suicide leaping into the Caribbean off the freighter *Orizaba*. One of the last fully rigged American sailing ships was called *Tahiti*, "teller of tales", the name given Robert Louis Stevenson by the South Seas natives.

Another fifty names of ships follow in various contexts. If such things as the *Beaufort* State or the *Pilmsoll* line come to be mentioned as we are treated to a learned disquisition as to how they got their name. This is often, enjoyably, informative; in general, Buckley is a treasure-trove of odd bits of the sea life, and obscure aspects of sea life.

It should be said that *Steaming to Bamboola*, through its impressive technique, manages not only to convey the realities of sea life with proper respect, but often to be extremely funny in the process. Buckley has an admirable ear for turns of speech, black and white, and he has the novelist's gift of impersonation. It is not, in the circumstances, altogether surprising that he should be a good specialist writer for *Vice* magazine. I would be nice, all the time, to hear him some time in his own words.

LAW

DAVID PANNICK

Judicial Review of the Death Penalty
245pp. Duckworth. £18.
0 7136 1594 7

Frank Coppola, executed in Richmond, Virginia, on August 11, 1982, at his own request, four years after his conviction on a capital charge, was first a beneficiary and then a victim of the protected processes of American justice. A phrase of Alistair Cooke's sticks in the mind – "The long trail to the Supreme Court, that grievous distance from the wound to the hospital, that makes judicial review so cruel a kindness". The compatibility of the execution process with the constitutional guarantees is in many jurisdictions one of the harder questions for judicial decision. David Pannick has written a fine passionate book to assert that most of the world's superior courts have given the wrong answer. The fault, he holds, lies partly in mistaken notions of the judicial process. So the book is both about death and judging.

English readers may of course think it peculiar that in so many countries judges rather than the legislature (let alone the electorate) have the last word in deciding whether it is a good or morally permissible thing to put citizens to death. In Britain the legislature has decided that it is not a good thing for the ordinary run of homicidal criminals, though allowable in the case of those engaged in piracy, to be executed in the course of piracy, violating royal consorts and elder daughters, or setting fire to Her Majesty's ships and dockyards.

But our constitution is an odd one. In the United States and elsewhere such ethical fine-tuning falls to the courts. There the justices of the various State and Supreme Courts have had to decide whether the death penalty in its various forms violates the constitutional guarantees of due process and equal protection, or the ban on imposition of cruel or unusual punishments. Similar questions arise in a large number of jurisdictions – for example in Canada, India, Japan, Pakistan, Cyprus and Singapore. In one place and another the death penalty has been imposed, even in times, for a surprising variety of activities. Habit apparently punished with death "communist activities of any kind". Cuba has a capital penalty for setting fire to sugar plantations. Zanzibar imposed it for smuggling doves. In Somalia it seems to have figured as a novel form of constitutional instrument, being decreed as the penalty for opposing a statute giving rights to women. Most moralists and even many lawyers would in these cases see moral and constitutional objections to the death penalty. But can it ever be justified in a community which has enacted protections for the rights of its citizens, including a guarantee of their rights to life and liberty? The author has made a resourceful and wide-ranging collection of the arguments used to establish that in some or all cases it cannot.

Judges who use these arguments seem to fall into two categories. First there are those who believe that the rights guaranteed by the constitution make the death penalty wrong and unlawful in itself and in all cases. Secondly there are some who say that it becomes unconstitutional if applied in a certain manner so as to violate procedural canons of equity, predictability or proportionality. In between there may be a third group whose profess the second position but whose notions of what constitutes equity, proportionality or predictability are such that any actual legal system will be found to fall to comply with them.

On the face of it the second position seems the most plausible. Bills of Rights, even in the United States, do not profess to say that life, liberty and property are never in any circumstances to be taken away. They often say – as in the fifth and fourteenth amendments to the US federal constitution – that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law. That, if it has any meaning at all, means that there are at least some circumstances in

which property or liberty or life may be taken, provided that certain conditions are met. Those who believe in the United States that the death penalty is *per se* unconstitutional must believe one of three things: that the Founding Fathers did not mean what they said; or that the due process conditions never can be met; or that what the drafters of the constitution said may be ignored. It is noticeable that some American liberals, including some judges, who are eager to give absolute and literal effect to the original intention of the constitution in matters such as free speech are inconsistent in their sympathy for the Founding Fathers' views on property, equality or crime.

The notion of "due process of law" has certainly expanded in the United States. Besides procedural fairness it now embraces what Mr Justice Frankfurter called "the canons of decency and fairness which express the notions of justice of English-speaking people". So if a majority of the Supreme Court come to believe (which they have not yet) that the taking of a criminal's life for any offence and under any procedure in itself offends basic canons of justice then the way would be open for them to hold the death penalty unconstitutional *per se* as a violation of the due process clause. Elsewhere, however, the American sense of due process has been held in some suspicion because of its capacity for turning judges into censors of the wisdom of the legislative policy. Constitution-makers have sought, for example that life or liberty might not be taken away "except in accordance with law" or "except in accordance with procedure established by law". In view of the history of the adoption of these clauses, attempts to import those full-blown American due process requirements into them in India, Japan and Singapore involve tortured and implausible arguments. Where a constitution places other limitations on the legislature however it can be said that the word "law" may at least have to be understood to include them. This brings us to the various procedural vices that may undermine the validity of a death penalty that is in principle permissible.

In the United States, since the landmark decision in *Furman v. Georgia* in 1972, a number of States have enacted death penalty statutes and some of them have been tested against the due process, equal protection requirements and eighth amendment prohibition on cruel and unusual punishments. From this process it has emerged that such statutes may be unconstitutional if they involve elements of caprice, cruelty, unpredictability, disproportionality or improper discrimination. Here of course what is important are the subsidiary tests and arguments used to bring penal laws within one or other of these categories. Some of them are appealing, and others less so. A legislature, at any rate, is faced with a difficult job if it wants to preserve its traditions of juries or gas chamber. There are formidable amounts of penological theory and forensic ingenuity to overcome. In the first place the law must avoid giving the judge or jury an unstructured discretion to impose the death penalty, since its outcome will be unpredictable. On the other hand it must not make the death penalty mandatory since that may make jurors manipulate the legal process to avoid imposing the penalty and the result will still be unpredictable. State legislatures have tried to meet these difficulties by listing aggravating and mitigating factors that might indicate the circumstances in which the non-mandatory penalty might be imposed. But some judges have suggested that such lists would provide no protection against juries that were determined to decide, in accordance with whim or caprice, (a) jury trial compatible with due process?)

Attempts to structure discretion are, it is urged, only cosmetic. Even if the jury does its duty and avoids all caprice, the unforeseeable elements of it may enter at an earlier and later stage. There will be discretion in the prosecution process, and discretion as to the later exercise of legislative clemency. Mercy is not a safeguard but a further source of potential caprice in

Due taking of life

Geoffrey Marshall

the capital penal process. A legislature is not permitted to remove uncertainty by confining the death penalty to all crimes of a certain kind or to say there can be no mitigating circumstances in certain types of case. It is urged that a mandatory death penalty can serve no rational legislative purpose since there are always differences between one killer and another (eg between Lee Harvey Oswald, killer of Kennedy, and Jack Ruby, killer of Oswald). Indeed, it begins to look as if a legislature is not permitted to do anything or prescribe anything at all that will deprive a defendant of the opportunity of arguing that his rights have been violated by the uncertainty of the criminal process.

Further considerations may be deployed if need be about the discriminatory impact of other social factors. However fair the legal regime, the poor still cannot exploit its opportunities as effectively as the rich, so the equal protection of the laws may be in danger. In some judicial opinions the poor are coupled with minorities generally and both with the wider category of those holding unpopular beliefs. "The gallows swallow, in most cases, the social discenter, the political protester, the poor and the under privileged, the member of minority

groups..." Even the supposed virtues of the Anglo-American common-law system underline its inadequacy. If a defendant prolongs the process between conviction and execution by using all the opportunities for appeal and delay that he and his legal representatives are entitled to employ, the fact that the sentence is delayed itself makes the penal process cruel, if not in the normal sense usual. A convicted defendant should not be deterred from invoking his legal remedies by the thought that he might have to give up his right to plead the Eighth Amendment, even if that threat did not deter him from his crime in the first place. It is widely supposed that capital punishment is not a deterrent of an effective sort anyway. Certainly a large number of convicted defendants in the United States are not deterred from delaying the carrying out of sentences for long periods. This provides an additional argument of a statistical character. Since it is an established fact that large numbers of homicides occur and since (for the reasons mentioned) only a very few executions take place, any given convicted killer cannot accurately predict whether he will be among the small, either unlucky or justifiably ineffective, number who at some point

will find their sentences being carried out. This disabling uncertainty is inconsistent with the law that provides for his punishment being lawful, constitutional, equal, proportionate, normal or kind.

Having described and displayed these arguments with such clarity, Pannick must face a question on the wider thesis about law and adjudication in which he embeds his argument. In his introduction and conclusion he rejects the thesis that in "hard cases" there can be any right answers. Though some legal philosophers and many judges have proceeded on that assumption, it is, he argues, an error – "the erroneous premise on which the Anglo-American legal system is based". Yet in the body of his book he has set out a case that will persuade many to the conclusion that the right answer to the question whether the death penalty is compatible with the rule of law and individual rights is that it is not. So, paradoxically, there will be a number of readers who took up the book in sympathy with its theory of law but sceptical about the unlawfulness of the death penalty. Some of them will put it down convinced opponents of capital punishment but with their jurisprudential convictions badly shaken.



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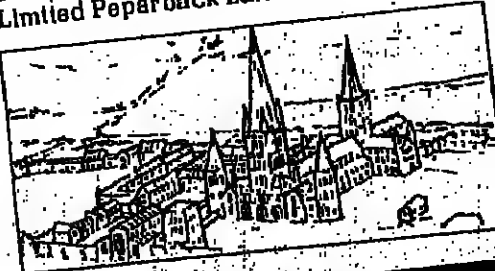
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Pronounced distinctions

Robert Burchfield

J. C. WELLS

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It is not really understood how the spoken language operates - whether as the output of a servo-mechanism - that is, a complex system with feedback loops monitoring itself and modifying itself as it goes along - or by something equally complex; and to most speakers it simply doesn't matter how it operates so long as it does. One can but marvel that millions of people can communicate daily by speech and manage their linguistic relationships with no more than relatively unimportant misunderstandings.

It is all the more mysterious how it comes about that if one moves just a few miles away from one's own habitat in different set of linguistic sounds is encountered - still those of recognizably the same language but subtly and charmingly different - and that one does not even need to move outside one's immediate area to encounter other, immediately different, sets of sounds representing social or educational rather than geographical distinctions from oneself.

These general considerations are true of all languages which in historical time have remained geographically static. Variation is governed by the social arrangements within a group or class, or by a geographical boundary like a river or a line of mountains. And within the borders and limits of a given set of variants of one language it is quite normal to find other people using totally unintelligible sets of sounds (foreign languages) or half-way houses (one's own language spoken by foreigners).

Over the centuries the movement of clans and tribes of people has produced the kind of crup that would emerge if a blind god had sprinkled seeds at random on a field - a vast array of diverse patterns, usually not even interlocking or decussated, but crossed and intersected by every kind of structured diversity.

Of all the main languages of the world none is more widely disseminated and more subtly sliced and severed than English - and all within the space of only 1,500 years. In the middle of the fifth century the sovereignty of these islands was forcibly disturbed, and in due course acquired, by groups of marauding tribes from across the Channel. From the diversity of the earliest records of their language it can be assumed that the newcomers were already divided into subgroups using different modes of pronunciation, grammar and usage, even though they remained for the most part mutually intelligible.

Political domination followed, first in Winchester and later in London, and a main mode of speech (and writing) gradually emerged which came eventually to be widely recognized as a standard. This standard, at any rate as far as its spoken form was concerned, seems not to have been clearly discerned and widely adopted by educated people, however, for centuries, and in practice not much before the eighteenth century. The standard selected, as Daniel Jones put it in his *Pronunciation of English*, 1909, "is that which firms the nearest approximation, according to the judgement of the writer, to the general usage of educated people in London and the neighbourhood". But in the nature of things it could not be expected that this standard would be transferred intact to North America, the West Indies, southern Africa, and Australasia, and that it would then move at the same rate and in the same way as its equivalent in the country the grants had left behind.

The documentation of all these early linguistic changes gathered momentum

during the nineteenth century and the landmarks are well known - especially the foundation of the Early English Text Society in 1864; the publication of quantities of learned papers in Great Britain and outside, particularly in Germany; the planning and execution of the great *Oxford English Dictionary* by Sir James Murray and his colleagues; the founding of the English Dialect Society leading to the publication in seven volumes (1896-1905) of the *English Dialect Dictionary* edited by Joseph Wright; and the publication of important works on English pronunciation by Alexander John Ellis and Henry Sweet. This great investigative phase has not ended and many linguistic scholars are still at work tidying up, infilling, and extending the research of these pioneers.

But, with the development of new technology, new methods of analysis of speech sounds become possible and very soon older systems of phonetic transcription came under attack. The new phrase was clearly recognizable after the 1930-45 war, though its origins can be traced much earlier. J. C. Wells belongs very much to the new movement and his three volumes now published, called *Accents of English*, represent an ambitious attempt to describe the state of spoken English, and to show how each branch and twig, in Scotland, Canada, the Leeward Islands and elsewhere, has its own sets of distinctive sounds that can be scientifically described, and compared with those of standard English. It is an astonishingly ambitious exercise and its failure, if that is what it is, can be measured only by the unfair technique of setting individual parts of his work against more extended standard accounts of the speech of the various areas written by local specialists. The time has passed, (indeed may never have existed) when one scholar could capture the flavour of all varieties of English in the world.

Before returning to the work of earlier scholars I should make it clear at once that the work under review is not one for the general reader, even with the aid of the very instructive cassettes which come with the books. Dr Wells picks his way through the thickets of recent scholarship on concepts like that of phonological space, taxonomic-phonemic models, multiple complementation, neutralization, and so on. In Volume One he describes his theoretical base. He then goes on to give a severely scientific description of the spoken forms of English in the various regions of Great Britain (Volume Two), and beyond the British Isles (Volume Three). He finds it necessary to inspect his terminology carefully before the exercise begins (Volume One, p. 1):

By the term "accent" . . . I mean a pattern of pronunciation used by a speaker for whom English is the native language or, more generally, by the community or social grouping to which he or she belongs. More specifically, I refer to the use of particular vowel or consonant sounds and particular rhythmic, intonational, and other prosodic features; to the syntagmatic (structural) and paradigmatic (systemic) interrelationships between these, and to the more or less (phonological) representations which can be seen as underlying the actual (phonetic) articulations, together with the rules which relate the one to the other; and to the relationship between all of these and the individual words or other items which constitute the speaker's mental lexicon or vocabulary.

Observe the care with which he clears the deck. By page 3 he is "avoiding confusion" by "avoiding the bare term 'dialect' and on the same page he only just refrains (though he later doesn't) from using the term 'lect' (= language variety), of which the highest social stratum - the language of the upper classes is called the *acrolect*, and the lowest the *basilect*, and intermediate varieties (those spoken by you and me) the *mesolect*. One must be prepared to accept that one is being alerted through an extremely complicated terminology to a guide who has been through it many times before.

Here it might be salutary to turn aside for a moment and recall the views of some of the discarded giants of the past. First, those of a classic prescriptivist, the eighteenth-century actor and lexicographer, John Walker. The subtitle of his *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*, 1791, points the way:

In which not only the meaning of every word is clearly explained, and the sound of every syllable distinctly shown, but where words are subject to different pronunciations, the reasons for each are at large displayed, and the preferable pronunciation is pointed out. To which are prefixed, principles of English pronunciation. Likewise rules to be observed by the natives of Scotland, Ireland, and London for avoiding their respective peculiarities (my italics).

Walker concludes that the pronunciation of London "is undoubtedly the best": "that is, not only the best by courtesy, and because it happens to be the pronunciation of the capital, but best by a better title, that of being more generally received".

I shall pass over the pronunciation system adopted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as being sufficiently accessible (if not actually familiar) to readers of this journal. It is perhaps just worth mentioning that Sir James Murray adopted as his standard the late-Victorian speech of educated Londoners, but his views were partially governed by his own Scottishness:

In cases where sounds are identified by some English speakers, and distinguished by others, it has been thought best to mark the distinction, which may be disregarded by those to whom it is unknown; thus, the sounds in *for* and *four* are distinguished by the majority of orthoepists, though commonly identified by natives of the south of England.

Murray was also greatly influenced by the views of A. Melville Bell, whose system of Visible Speech, introduced in the 1860s, was based on a set of forty-three special phonetic symbols indicating the position of the lips and tongue in making sounds. More or less at the same time Murray's friend Alexander J. Ellis had decided that "no accented letters, few turned, and still fewer mutilated letters should be employed". Ellis therefore invented a new system of symbols called Palaeotype, and for the representation of regional English speech an even more complicated system called Glossotype.

Fortunately by 1882, when he sent the first section of the *OED* to press, Murray had settled for a more comprehensible system which even today, as I have discovered, can be satisfactorily mastered by members of staff of the Supplement to the *OED*, many of whom have had no phonetic training. And so Visible Speech, Palaeotype, and Glossotype went out of the window and were replaced in Oxford by Murray's *OED* system, and outside Oxford, beginning in 1888, by the International Phonetic Alphabet.

The first half of the present century was dominated by the work of Daniel Jones at University College London. In 1909 he set down all that he considered one needed to know about English speech-sounds in *The Pronunciation of English: Phonetics and Phonetic Transcriptions*. In sixty-nine pages, with the utmost clarity, he described the careful conversational style, or SLP (standard pronunciation) as he called it, with which he was concerned. The organs of speech were described and illustrated. English consonants were carefully classified according to the organs which articulated them - labial, dental, palatal, velar, glottal and so on - and according to the manner in which the organs articulated them - plosive, nasal, lateral, rolled, fricative and so on. The vowels were then characterized in terms of the position of the tongue, lips and larynx. This brief set of models, tables and diagrams were then exploited with admirable clarity in a section called "English Speech Sounds in Detail". In 1917 Jones's *English Pronouncing Dictionary* was

published, a 419-page alphabetical list of words and names accompanied by phonetic transcriptions. Both were books that the general public, or the university student, could turn to with the certainty that one could find an uncomplicated answer to what one was looking for.

Even today diachronic studies continue in total exclusion zones such as that of the Early English Text Society. "The reflex of OE *hw* is frequently *qv* (or *qv*) and *w*, e.g. *qvwa* . . . for *what* (what is also used); *qvwa* for *who* . . ." (The Digby Plays, EETS, 1982). But the main bands of present-day phoneticians, including Dr Wells, venture into new territory and play new language games. Some of these - for example the search for minimal pairs - can be played by anyone, and are part of the web spun to capture the innocent young. Brave young minds have pondered on the implications of such matters as indexicality ("information we collect from listening to a person speak in order to slot him into an appropriate stereotype") and the rule ordering ("rule-determined modifications") of "the underlying, memory-stored phonological representation" to "the actual surface representation".

As a student of the English language I learnt the IPA and the articulatory facts of life, and accorded a working knowledge of the numerous phonological and lexical connections that could be shown to exist between Old English and its early Germanic and earlier Indo-European relatives. I also did my best to master the intricacies of the phonological development of English since 1066. In very broad terms some selected sounds turned into some other sounds under the influence of an adjacent sound (i-mutation), or because of vowel-harmony (*ablaut*), or for some other reason (assimilation, fronting, etc.). One formed the impression that sound changes occurred at some specified periods but not at others, because of certain phonetic conjunctions that happened to occur at the time. I came to believe in a general theory of or of seepage. It seemed clear that whole communities changed elements of their speech, sometimes quite dramatically, because of the existence of adjacent palatal consonants, yods, or back vowels, or because of some other anticipatory or retroactive circumstance.

Last year I considered the nature of spoken English in some detail before writing a booklet called *The Spoken Word: A BBC Guide*. I discussed the nature of RP with many principles of them phonetically trained, more of them not. What emerged was a reiteration of three main views:

No one was aware of a phonological change that had happened in his or her speech in his or her own lifetime, that is of an unobservable and irreversible change of a particular vowel, diphthong, or consonant to one that was demonstrably new.

Everyone believed that new borrowed or imitated modes of pronunciation, shiftings of stress, and so on, were coming into being all the time, whether from America, from popular songs, from broadcasters, or from some other source, and that others were being abandoned (e.g. *cross*, *off*, etc.) pronounced in a different way). These had been resisted with various degrees of determination by my informants.

Almost everyone over the age of thirty spoke of the "unintelligibility" and "inarticulacy" of the younger generation, though it was admitted that this alleged unintelligibility seemed to set up no discernible communication barriers among even the more uneducated young people themselves.

In other words the plotting of language change seemed to be much less of a developmental process than a swapping one. The cases of most apparent sound change, *p* for *Dr Wells*, were not to be sought in the "principle of least effort", in "persistent infatuation" (a grotesque notion) or in splits of adoption by RP speakers of already existing alternative features from other varieties of English. Expressed another way, the causes of apparent sound change in RP lie deeply

embedded in the births, deaths, and marriages columns, and in the spaces of newspapers devoted to social elevation and to the declaration of wills. The *nouveaux riches* tend also to be the "nouveaux parleurs", and they bring some of their language habits with them.

Dr Wells recognizes the existence of "British prestige innovations" - "certain phonological developments in the history of RP which took effect only when the General American mainstream had taken off". Among these are "Dropping" (in words like *head, scarce, start, north*, etc.); "Rhoticization" (in *us, far away*; leading to the intrusive *r* of *overt-impulsive*); "Glottal Cluster Reduction" (the loss of *t* from the cluster */tʃw/*, creating new homonyms, for example *whine/whine*, *wheel/heel*); and numerous others. The Americans have a matching set of innovations, for example "Unrounding" (the *n*-like sound they used in *for, four*, etc.); "Later Yod Dropping" (the elimination of */j/* from earlier */ju/* as in *hus, chills, audios*, etc.); and "Tapping and T-Volving" (the *d*-like sound used in *atom, borrow, porly*, etc.). All this is familiar enough, except for the terminology.

In Volume Two he has brought together material widely dispersed in works concerned with regional forms of English in the British Isles. It is comforting to discover that so much useful work is being done. Recent research, as Wolfgang Viereck reports in the journal *English World-Wide* (Heidelberg), Volume 2, No 2 (1981) includes: "Creole language features in the speech of West Indian primary school children in Nottingham. The dialect of Naanton (Gloucestershire) Style shifting in a Cardiff work setting. The tubu language of the fishermen Orkney and Shetland. Phonological rules and sociolinguistic variation in Norwegian English."

In Volume Three Dr Wells deals with overseas varieties of English - the United States, Canada, the West Indies, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Africa, and the Far East. It seemed clear that whole communities changed elements of their speech, sometimes quite dramatically, because of the existence of adjacent palatal consonants, yods, or back vowels, or because of some other anticipatory or retroactive circumstance.

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THEATRE

Sleazy rider

John Stokes

WOLF MANKOWITZ

Maezappa: The Lives, Loves and Legends of Adah Isaacs Menken: A Biographical Quest.
270pp. Blond and Briggs. £10.95.
0 8534 119 3

Every great star needs a vehicle, and for Adah Isaacs Menken it was a horse. At the climax of *Maezappa*, an adaptation of Byron's poem, she careered around the stage strapped to a pulsing stallion, out through the wings into theatrical legend. Once someone had realized that a tired melodrama would take on an entirely new and thrilling dimension were its hero played by a nearly naked girl, there was no stopping her. Clad in the nineteenth-century equivalent of a body stocking and, judging from the posters, sometimes adorned with a tiny moustache, Menken as Maezappa offered a strange embodiment of that "man executes the performance but woman trains the man". On and off the stage, she invented a whole series of exotic identities, each calculated to satisfy her own needs as well as those of her public.

Wolf Mankowitz is well aware of the glories of this kind of protean subject, and he takes the precaution, first adopted by A. J. A. Symonds in his life of Frederick Rolfe, of describing his book as a "quest". Confronted by a barrage of flims and legends, fables and fabrications he has wisely made his researches part of his narrative. Inviting us to share his own fascination with the myths, he simultaneously assures us that truth is still his goal.

One chapter in particular shows just

how well this method works. His curiosity aroused by some unique information given in an earlier life of Menken, Mankowitz decided to investigate its origins. *Queen of the Plaza*, published under the name of "Paul Lewis" in America and "Samuel Edwards" in England, claimed to be based in part on a theatrical collection belonging to one "Henry Ewing Hibbard" and on Menken's own diary, apparently housed at Harvard. Mankowitz's latter of enquiry to Harvard, however, produced a flat denial of all knowledge of the diary. He next approached "Paul Lewis" - who turned out to be Noel Gerson, a highly successful and popular author. Gerson prevaricated. He regretted that "Hibbard" was now dead, and he had no idea why Harvard should have been unhelpful. Mankowitz, his suspicions confirmed, changed his tactics. Writing "as one old pro to another", he told Gerson: "If you did, in fact, invent that diary, I would simply consider it to be an achievement in fable-building which should be acknowledged for its creative force - and I am certain it would be so regarded by Maezappa herself." Flattered by this approach, Gerson confessed that Hibbard and the diary were all a Menken-like invention. This freed Mankowitz both to reassure the anxious Harvard librarians and to devote a section of his own book to Gerson's fable.

The selves that Menken invented were remarkable for their wit, heartedness and unpredictability, the creations of a truly wilful imagination. Even her race was a role: although she always maintained that she was Jewish, it is likely that her real origins were New Orleans Creole. Reliable records of Adah Isaacs Menken, Jewess, actress and poet, only begin with her marriage to Alexander I. Menken in Texas in 1856.

There were to be three more marriages, all short-lived - one of them, possibly bigamous, to the Irishman John Carmel Heenan, self-appointed heavyweight champion of America.

Menken's New York success with *Maezappa* in 1861 fixed what was to become the recurrent pattern of her career: using her theatrical sensationalism to grab the attention of literati. In New York she attracted the poets Adah Clare and Walt Whitman, whose style she also adopted. In California and Nevada she found a *leitmotif* role among the journalists in the *Golden Era*, and won facetious applause from Mark Twain. In London in 1864 her debut was master-minded by Smith of Astley's, home of equestrian display. While the press fêted her with prurient speculations about the erotic dangers of a "statuesque" female body, the literary world, including Rossetti and most notoriously Swinburne, immediately spotted a winner. By September 1866 she was in Paris and heavily pregnant. When the baby underwent Christian baptism, emerging with the opportunistic names of Louis Duvend Victor Emmanuel, George Sand was godmother. A year later the child was dead and Menken had gained a ribald new sobriquet: Adah had become "Dado" - (lobby horse).

All that remained was an artistic alliance with the Menken found with many literary lions: *Dumas père*. The photographs that commemorate their affair - a corpulent skirt-sleeved old man with negroid features clutched with girlish trust by an obviously mature woman - are among the most extraordinary ever taken in an age which was rapidly discovering the possibilities that the new art held for ambiguous disclosures. Today they



Menken as Maezappa on Broadway

offer something of the assertive paths of a study by Diane Arbus, but at the time their message was more directly challenging to sexual and racial sensibilities, as Verlaine's unpleasant

squib - "Quel photographe fou souda/L'Oncle Tom avec Miss Ada?" - suggests.

Every picture of Menken - and there were thousands - told its own imponderable sexual story. For Dumas she had been a surrogate, for Swinburne a therapist. Another equally infamous photograph shows the hoyish, all too obedient English poet firmly clasped by a solicitous matron. Rossetti's report that Menken couldn't make Swinburne understand that "biting's no use" is well known, but whatever went on between them may be easier to imagine than to explain.

Published a week after her death in Paris in 1868, Menken's one volume of poetry, *lyfheia*, carried a dedication to, and a facsimile letter (possibly forged) from, Dickens, and an epitaph from Swinburne: "Dolores". Mankowitz repeats a few of her verses, including "Judith", a particularly gory addition to the gallery of severed heads that was grizzly assembled in the nineteenth century: "the strong throat all hot and reeking with blood, that will thrill me with wild unspeakable joy as it courses down my bare body and dabbles my cold feet!" "Judith" has been suggested as a source for Wilde's *Salome*, which is not very likely, though it certainly cries out for illustrations by Beardsley.

Mankowitz may be right to celebrate Menken as one of those women who "sought total liberty for themselves by applying their talents and beauties to the art of manipulating men". But in his very professionalism he tends to iron out the convolutions of sexual need. There was a desperation about Menken's myth-making. In *Maezappa* she struggled with entanglements of her own design: in life she turned whips into bonds.

Quiet, unpumped and everyday

Julie Hankey

WILLIAM TYDEMAN (Editor)

Plays by Tom Robertson
"Society", "Ours", "Caste" and "School".
272pp. Cambridge University Press.
£19.50 (paperback, £5.95).
0 521 23860 0

GEORGE ROWELL (Editor)

Plays by W. S. Gilbert
"The Palace of Truth", "Sweethearts", "Princess Toto", "Engaged" and "Rogenerantz and Guildenstern".
189pp. Cambridge University Press.
£17.50 (paperback, £4.95).
0 521 23869 8

In 1865 Marie Wilton, Mrs Bancroft to be, borrowed £1,000 and took the lease of the Queen's Theatre in the Tottenham Court Road, commonly known as the Dust-hole. She was then known as a burlesque actress, "the cleverest girl", in Dickens's view, "I have seen in my time, and the most singularly original". She was determined to play comedy, and was horrified by the existing clientele at the Queen's, an orange-sucking crowd who brought their crying babies (Philip too at Sadler's Wells had been plagued with babies, and had had the women searched at the door to make sure none were concealed in their shawls). She immediately set about exorcising this public by means of rose-pink, white, gold and blue paint, and flowers in niches and spring-stuffed chairs. Before the onslaught of carriages from the West End, the returned, and at the newly christened Prince of Wales there began an era of genteel comedy which was to enable her and Mrs Bancroft to retire twenty years later, with a net profit of £180,000.

Here collected, in the series *British and American Playwrights 1750-1920*, which aims to make known the forgotten stage-successes of that period, are four of the most popular comedies of the Bancrofts.

management, *Society*, *Ours*, *Caste* and *School*. These are unfamiliar titles now, by an almost forgotten author, Tom Robertson, but were so popular in their turn. Reading them now, and back in retirement, declared "indeed, we believe that we might have put the six Robertsonian plays [there were two more] upon a sort of dramatic wheel, and have gone on for years, with nothing but successive revivals of them in their turn." Reading them now, and imagining them on the stage, as Robertson's full stage directions and William Tyndeman's theatrically informative introduction enable one to do, one catches a strong whiff of that comfortably spring-cushioned audience. No special genius of the author's, no eccentricity of vision or invention intervenes between the after-dinner world of the auditorium and the world on stage. The rose-bud chit-chat repeats itself before and behind the footlights.

The novelty of Robertson lay there, in the ordinariness itself, in his showing of people who, though rich and maybe titled, fall in love over the roly-poly pudding (actually made on stage by Marie Wilton during the last act of *Ours*), who bring the milk bottles, or rather the milk can, in with them when they return from the wans, who open a courtship by returning a lost shoe. A love scene might take place in a hut overlooking the Crimean war as gently as in a drawing-room in London, thus:

May I trust that some day I may not be indifferent to you, and if so that I make you my own - my wife. Don't let me frighten you, I won't! Tell the Colonel - I mean Lady Shendryn (snobby dragon). I know you can't love me now - but I'll try to deserve your love; and perhaps if I try hard - and I will - I may succeed. Sebastopol isn't too far a day; and you'll let me try - won't you Sebastopol? - I mean Mary? (with great agitation)

The tissue of humour is thin enough and hardly bears quotation, but perhaps it gives an idea of the amiable fooling which runs through the sentiment of these pieces. There is broader stuff, Dickensian never-does, vulgar, parvenus, snuck-up dowagers, but Robertson's distinctive

touch is in the gently bathetic sentimental scenes where two lovers might wander in the moonlight carrying a milk jug, or separate from a tête-à-tête in the rain under a tree, she wearing his coat and he her bonnet.

What strikes one now, though, is the extreme theatrical artifice of these scenes where bread and butter and cups of tea were, with such revolutionary ordinariness, consumed. Robertson underlines his themes with the neatest possible juxtapositions of character and class. While, for example, the romantic couple in *Ours*, heedless of worldly prospects, murmur sweetly on one side of the stage, the old bob who wishes to divide them bickers, unheard and unheard, with her husband on the other side. In *Caste*, just as the young aristocrat sinks his family's prejudices and implores a ballet girl to become his wife, the door opens and in reels her repulsive drunken father - "act drop". In *Society* the social-climbing Chodd junior woos the heroine with his cheque-book, while audibly from the hustings offstage the penniless gentleman harp woos the electora with sentiment. And so on.

A Robertson play always has its cake and eats it. He may laugh at snobbery, but his heroines always marry with money and title in the end, and this too requires artifice - ludicrous revelations, for example, of deaths and legacies two minutes before the final curtain. In the same cake-eating way, Robertson is not above enlivening his everyday world with splashes of purple, and notably with elaborate stage pictures in which the heroines usually totters and faints as the curtain falls on the second act.

But when the setting was natural, when the doorknobs turned and the locks really looked, when the rain pattered on leaves and the snow rushed in every time the hot door opened in the Crimea, the staginess simply seemed part of the same reality. Tyndeman well describes this theatrical context and quotes Shaw's reminder (made at a time when realism meant less rather than Robertson) that there was originality, a new start, in these trifles: "In the windows, in the doors, in the walls, in the carpet, in the

ceiling, in the kettle . . . in the familiar phrases, the quiet unpumped everyday utterance".

Our pleasure now cannot be so innocent: not so unclouded as when the warm-hearted soft-headedness of Robertson's social ideas was simply the air that middle-class Victorians breathed. That Marie Wilton gave her roly-poly pudding to a family of poor children after every performance of *Ours* - there were seven hundred of them - is a perfect Robertsonian touch, and typical of the times. All the same, unless one is altogether too stern for him, there is a pleasure to be had simply in encountering the period - the larkly, soppy and sometimes delicate charm of that kind of Englishness.

Compared with this, W. S. Gilbert (without Sullivan) is altogether more astute and cynical. George Rowell selects a "fairly" verse drama, *The Palace of Truth*; the Robertsonian Gilbert, the only sentimentalist in the Bancroft repertory; *Princess Toto*, a pre-Sullivan musical play; *Engaged*, a comedy of contemporary life; and a short skit on the play scene in *Hanlet* entitled *Rogenerantz and Guildenstern*. This selection represents the different kinds of theatrical writing practised by Gilbert, more than it demonstrates the box-office taste of the period as the Robertson volume is bound to do. George Rowell's introduction therefore dwells less on the plays themselves, on how they were acted and received at the time, than on the development of Gilbert as a writer in each genre. As a less popular writer, at this stage of his career, than Robertson, and less novel from the point of view of stage practice, Gilbert obviously gives less scope for that kind of treatment.

But *Engaged* did create a sensation at the time, not in its fascinating to read the reviews of it that M. R. Booth prints in his edition of *Nineteenth-Century Plays*. Reading the play now one could be forgiven for not guessing the extremes of delight and disgust it provoked a century or so ago. True, not a single person in it expresses anything that is not base and mercenary while at the same time using the serious language of sentiment, but

the whole situation is so calculatedly absurd, the selfish materialism so grotesque and open that one is inclined to laugh it off. Yet while many reviewers relished the wit, others found it revolting, marred, wrote one, with "dashes of sulphuric acid and the most noxious bitter". Gilbert, it seemed, had given the public a "premeditated insult": the cleverness was not "wholesome or pleasant", and though the spectators may laugh they "can hardly arise from the entertainment with any respect for it". One reviewer found himself as unwilling to exploit precisely why he disliked it as he would be to describe "the symptoms of disease". What really upset him was that the actors behaved so as burlesque characters, but as real ladies and gentlemen, in ordinary costume, employing none of those "amusing exaggerations which . . . dispel . . . any idea that the speaker is really in earnest". Quite so. Rowell does quote Gilbert's injunction to the actors to play the piece with "earnestness and gravity", but the resulting shock to the audience is almost more interesting. In the same way *Sweethearts*, a slight enough piece to read now, acquires a new sort of interest when one sees it momentarily through the eyes of the man who, during a performance of it, felt constrained to explain to the woman next to him, "Yes Ma'am, I am crying, and I'm proud of it!"

Gilbert is plainly more interested in the ideas than in the characters of his plays, and he therefore takes less well than Robertson to the three-act form. The very first verse of *The Palace of Truth* exhorts, long before the end, the relatively staid notion of human depravity clothed in charm of manner. *Engaged*, which uses the same idea, spins out enough permutations on the situation of a man betrothed simultaneously to three women to keep going, just, across three acts, but *Princess Toto*, being about someone who cannot remember what has happened from one act to the next, has repetition built into it. *Rogenerantz and Guildenstern*, best stands re-reading, and gives us Gilbert at his brief best. For although he is much wittier than Robertson, and more trenchant as a satirist, he seems to need a shaping hand - perhaps Sullivan's.

John Co. 116

commentary



"Acido Simerico", 1980, by Luis Gordillo, from the exhibition New Spanish Figurative which transfers on August 27 from Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge, to the ICA, London.

Author, Author

Competition No 84
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than September 10. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will be taken into consideration.

breakfast: the people of the capital know the Famous Lake better than the people of The Famous Lake (town about five miles across from the hotel) - which may not be clear to the armchair visitor, unless he understands that the lake went dry the year the hotel was built, drunk up (as water supply) by the thirsty citizens of the capital.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 84" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on September 17.

Competition No 80
Winner: Alistair Elliot
Answers:
1 Marriage is a step so grave and decisive that it attracts light-headed, variable men by its very awfulness.
R. L. Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque*.

1 He knew the hotel to be antiquated but this was overdoing it. The *belle chambre au quatrieme*, although too large for one guest and too cramped for a group, lacked every kind of comfort. He remembered that the lower room where he, a big man of thirty-two, had cried more often and more bitterly than he ever had in his sad childhood, had been ugly too but at least had not been so sprawling and cluttered as his new abode. Its bed was a nightmare. Its "bathroom" contained a bidet (mingle enough to accommodate a circus elephant, sitting) but no bath. The toilet seat refused to stay up.

2 I love you the more in that I believe you have liked me for my own sake and for nothing else - I have met with women whom I really think would like to be married to a Poem and to be given away by a Novel.

3 You can hardly imagine that I and Lord B. - would dream of allowing our only daughter - a girl brought up with the utmost care - to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel.
Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

TLS Crossword

As announced last week, we hope to run a literary crossword from time to time in the TLS, and to find setters who might be prepared to set such a crossword at regular intervals. Readers are invited to submit puzzles for possible inclusion, and a prize of one year's subscription to the TLS is offered for the best three submitted by September 17. They should be in *The Times* Crossword format: 15 x 15, symmetrical, no word to have more than half its letters blind or to start with two blind letters or to have three consecutive blind letters, all words to be connected to at least two others. All clues should have some literary bearing. Entries (no more than two per person) with clues in duplicate and answers on the second set, and explanations of literary references, should be sent to TLS Crossword, *Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.

2 I own my first sensations, as soon as I was left solitary and alone in my own chamber, in the hotel, were far from being so flattering as I had prefigured them. I walked up gravely to the window in my dusty black coat, and looking through the glass saw all the world in yellow, blue, and green, running at the ring of pleasure. The old with broken lances, and in helmets which had lost their vizors, the young in armour bright which shone like gold, beplumed with each gay feather of the east, all - all - tilting. It fascinated knights in tournaments at yore for fame and fire.

3 The hotel occupies an attractive and isolated site overlooking the Famous Lake. It is said to be the deepest lake in the world. In fact, either it is an ordinary large blue lake or something beyond description. If these travel notes are to be effective and useful I must make up my mind about such things, and fairly soon. The manager's living son conveyed this proverb to me over

Nude voodoo

Frank Tuohy

Macunaima
Riverside Studios

G Grupo de Teatro Macunaima has returned to London and is performing the extraordinarily successful show from which it took its name. The presenters suggest, without entire justification, that an audience with no knowledge of Portuguese can enjoy the action. This certainly seemed true on the first night. But such an audience is bound to lose a good deal of what makes *Macunaima* a more coherent and considered operation than the brilliant hurly-burly on stage might suggest. Fortunately a sizable notional contingent had come along and was ready to enjoy the local references, the knocking of shibboleths, the music-hall obscenities and puns, the novel by Mario de Andrade from which the show is adapted in an exercise in verbal fireworks, a less dour effort than the programme suggests, and a good deal of that quality comes through on stage, together with a sort of popular poetry, for which there is no English equivalent but which is similar to the work of Jacques Prévert in France.

Mario de Andrade was a leader in the movement to modernism which arrived somewhat tardily in Brazil; the equivalent of the pre-1914 Armory Show in New York or the London Post-Impressionist Exhibition was the *Semana de Arte Moderna* held in São Paulo in 1922. Mario de Andrade read his poems, was ritually howled down, and wrote a manifesto praising popular tradition and calling for a literary language "without archaism or erudition, natural and neologistic". A few years later, *Macunaima* mingles myth and the modern world, a strategy recommended by Joyce and Eliot but in this case probably deriving from Cocteau.

The whole movement in fact was

produced by a rich, French-speaking élite, spending much of its time in Paris, though perhaps stimulated by foreign travellers: Isadora Duncan and Diaghilev both turned up. Paul Claudel was at the Embassy in Rio. Carius Milhaud made arrangements of popular music and the novelist Blaise Cendrars paid almost yearly visits, though his Brazilian confrères found his pursuit of the exotic rather offensive - Europeans tended to think the Indian and Black cultures more interesting than the laboured sophistication of the ruling class. Mario de Andrade probably knew as much about Macunaima and his tribe as Longfellow did about Hiawatha. Claude Lévi-Strauss and the other anthropologists arrived in São Paulo some years later.

By then, the bounce and zest of the original movement had fizzled out. Andrade died in 1945 and in the following years the survivors of modernism, still in their grand houses with their servants in white gloves, had mostly become Stalinists. The Grupo de Teatro Macunaima, together with some recent films like *Bye Bye Brasil*, a great success in New York last year, show a refreshing absence of ideology and a return to aesthetic excitement. They indicate recent evolution towards a distinct national character, though perhaps not the "permanent psychic structure" Andrade hoped for.

The producers, too, have kept a sense of historical perspective. Macunaima himself is a sort of Till Eulenspiegel, rambly, clever, too lazy to live. His adventures begin in the jungle, where the forces of evil wear the plastic visors, rubber boots and overalls of the exploiters who are destroying the rain forests today. When with his brothers he arrives in São Paulo, we are back in the early years of the century: French-tarts, Italian boarding-house keepers whose menfolk spend the day in pyjamas, the crippled giant Piama disguised as a capitalist millionaire in silk hat and opera cloak, his daughters with frilly

dress and skipping ropes. Cariacá, Rio, with its grinning transvestites, brings us back to modern times.

The production brilliantly establishes conventions of its own: endless sheets of newspaper represent food, money; to sinister effect the disguise of a fabulous monster. A big white sheet takes on a life of its own, seeming to represent the features of the natural world. But the one impressive convention - I believe it is caused problems back home - is that of nudity. Cocteau remarked that a real horse on the stage looks like a mythological beast; stage horses should be lath and paper (Kabuki's Japan agrees with this). Up to now, nudity in the theatre has looked legendary in this way - in *Geppetto* they seemed more naked. *Macunaima* total nudity represents goddesses, spirits and works of art: golden breasts of these goddesses make her a Glynnian figure and the site of Uaiara rises magnificently from her lake. In the city the whores, French and Portuguese, are fully clothed as keep their hats on, while the millionaire's statues, shepherded by epicure creature out of Beaudouin, provide a thrilling image of decadent art.

Another leap forward is the abandonment of what Brazilians call "folclórico" - all those ethnic costumes and music in which the country is so rich. In the past, those going abroad relied heavily on song and dance, usually black, recruited from the stunts of the major cities: they all their own thing and never learned anything else. Here popular music plays a small part though the modern ceremony, which is fairly realistic, a part of the narrative. The amazing versatility and talented cast - and the names in the programme - show that the ethnic phase is over. In Brazil, unlike America, the contents of the melting pot have really melted. This, though, is merely a single factor among all those that make one feel immensely cheerful about this group and their season at Riverside Studios.

artists found their style easily transportable and even Innes's Welsh mountains are sometimes indistinguishable from his paintings of the Pyrenees. These small, intimate pochades in which local colour gives the brilliance of staid oil, are much of their vitality from the freedom which these artists enjoyed. John especially, at this time caught in an uneasy relationship with his patron John Quinn, relished the nomadic life. This exhibition celebrates the kind of him which produced the kind of his shoulders of Dorville, her face beauty pressing through the north and uninflected paintwork. Opposite, almost as if by another hand, hangs John's exaggeratedly nonchalant and flamboyant portrait of Lady Howard de Walden whose hospitality he and Lees enjoyed at Chirk Castle.

As with other visionary style, this sudden lyric outpouring was brief. In the winter of 1913-14 Innes moved to Morocco and spent the end of his life there, with a few years in between experimenting with different combinations of tobacco. Though he was known about Lees, who a few years later was unable to paint any more, Innes was unable to paint any more, though he was reverting to the scale multi-figure compositions, war to destroy this collection of paintings, when it came Innes was in the end, caring only for his medicine.

The exhibition will subsequently be shown at the Ortel Gallery, London, from October 30 to November 21, and at the Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield, from December 4 to January 4, 1983.

The Arts Council of Great Britain is preparing a retrospective exhibition of paintings by Sir Lawrence John Gower Innes and would be grateful to hear from the owners of his works. Please contact the Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens, London W2 2XN.

Lewis Carroll and his American readers

Morton N. Cohen

How curious that we Americans take to Lewis Carroll the way we do. The Alice books are, after all, quintessentially English, and Charles Dodgson was himself one of those carefully cultivated Englishmen who, as a matter of fact, Dodgson did not think much of Americans. When, in 1865, he decided to scrap the first edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, he had to choose between turning the unsatisfactory copy into waste paper or having them shipped to the United States to be sold there. He chose the latter. Americans "thought not to be very particular as to quality", he explained twenty years later in the preface to *The Game of Logic*, he "condemned them to the same fate".

In the summer of 1880, when he was at Eastbourne for his usual summer holiday, he encountered on the beach a new little friend, Lily Alice Godfrey, from New York; aged eight; but talked like a girl of fifteen or sixteen, and declined to be kissed on wishing goodnight, on the ground that she "never loved gentlemen". It is rather painful, Dodgson commented, "to see the lovely simplicity of childhood so soon rubbed off; but I fear it is true that there are no children in America."

Even though Dodgson never embraced his American cousins, they have gobbled him and his books up as the Walrus and the Carpenter did the oysters, and they have proved, during this 150th birthday year, that his Stanes popularity has, if anything, increased with time. American celebrations marking Dodgson's centenary began early. Last November St John's University in Minnesota jumped the gun with a two-day Lewis Carroll Festival. University faculty, students, and a few invited specialists participated in a round robin of receptions, seminars, workshops and discussion groups on Dodgson's accomplishments in mathematics, storytelling, photography, and tutoring.

One would expect New York to

make itself the centre of the American celebrations, and it certainly did. Mayor Edward I. Koch declared the day of Dodgson's birth, January 27, Lewis Carroll Day. His witty proclamation was read at a press conference by the city's Parks Commissioner, an appropriate choice because the bronze sculpture of Alice and her fellow-creatures in Wonderland, rubbed to a high sheen by children climbing up and sliding down its sides, graces Central Park.

Fifth Avenue bookshops and department stores devoted windows to Lewis Carroll; radio programmes and television networks offered moments of whimsical invention all their own; and at least two publishing houses staged Mad Hatter Tea Parties in support of Carroll books they had published. The biggest celebration of all took place at the Pierpont Morgan Library. Marking its own seventy-fifth anniversary, the Morgan could be doubly jubilant, for it had recently acquired the superb Arthur A. Houghton Jr collection of Carroll material, and it would go on display for the first time.

The exhibition opened on the birthday to the whirling of cameras and a long and patient line of Carroll fans that stretched along East 36th Street and up Madison Avenue. In terms of Carroll memorabilia, the exhibition was a blockbuster, offering a closer

view of Dodgson the man and Alice Liddell the girl and woman than any exhibition had done before.

In one showcase was Dodgson's prayer book, given to him by his aunt and godmother when he was seven; the Bible his parents gave him as a boy of thirteen; and his Shakespeare with his own index to the plays written in the famous purple ink. In another case were his microscope, with his initials painted in black on the cover and the warning: "Glass, with care"; and his silver watch, engraved inside the lid: "Rav. C. L. Dodgson, Christ Church."

In yet another case was Alice's own patented writing desk; a ruby ring she owned as a child; a birthday letter she wrote to her father when she was ten; her leather purse with "Alice" embroidered on the front; the Looking-Glass biscuit tin that Dodgson gave her; and the photograph he took of her dressed as a beggar child. First editions of Carroll works crammed other cases, as did original letters, illustrations, and rare photographs of and by Dodgson. In the centre case was propped the only surviving manuscript of the *Alice* stories, on loan from the British Library. A 133-page catalogue was available, a nontime introductory lecture was offered to the public, three more specialized lectures were given in the course of the exhibition, and Michael Rothwell came over from

England to give three performances of the one-man show on Lewis Carroll that he had earlier presented at the Bristol Old Vic and the Marmalade Theatre.

By April 18, when the exhibition closed, more than fifty thousand people had passed through the Morgan doors to see the display, an astonishing number when one considers that the Library, with all its fine exhibitions, normally draws between one and two hundred thousand viewers a year.

Other celebrations mushroomed. A number of new publications appeared, including an expensive *Alice* with new illustrations; a volume of original essays on Carroll entitled *Lewis Carroll: A Celebration*, another containing a list of the books known to have been in Carroll's own library; and a large volume containing *The Hunting of the Snark* and almost everything known about the poet. In the middle of June, an impressionistic play about Dodgson's life called *Looking-Glass* opened in New York, and in October Eva Le Gallienne will play the White Queen on Broadway in her own 1932 adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*. Also in the autumn the paperback edition of *The Selected Letters of Lewis Carroll* will appear, and an issue of *English Language Notes* will be devoted entirely to Carroll studies.

What is the meaning of all this attachment to Carroll on the other side of the Atlantic? "If there's no meaning in it," said the King, "that saves a world of trouble, you know. . . . And yet I don't know," he went on. . . . "I seem to see some meaning . . . after all." The meaning is that Americans enjoy the *Alice* books for the same reasons that most people do. They are fascinated by Dodgson's strange, almost mystical insight into the child's heart and mind and by his ability to let us share once again with him and with Alice herself the delights, the dreams, and the horrors of childhood. If anyone needed further evidence, he had only to look at the cover of the Swahili translation of *Alice* that was on display at the Morgan. It showed a drawing of a black Alice looking up at the Cheshire Cat. Dodgson knew that the joys and the yearnings of childhood were universal.



An ennive tea-party by the taxidermist Ploucquet of Stuttgart, one of 518 illustrations in *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design, Victorian and After* by Nikolaus Pevsner (280pp. Thames and Hudson, £7.50, 0 500 27256 5). First published in 1968, this pioneering collection of essays has now been reissued in paperback.

A museum and its city

N. S. Thompson

The Uffizi: Four Centuries of a Gallery
Florence

The Quatercentenary of the Uffizi has brought more than the expected celebrations and exhibitions; it has posed the fundamental question of Florence's future: what it should do with its museums and what it should do with itself as a unique "city-museum". These questions are bound up with the new thinking about the role of the museum in the cultural landscape, which is that it should be both a "centre" and also a "producer" of culture. On the one hand, we have the care and conservation of the past, and on the other, research, which can bring about new critical ideas, and education, which takes the museum out to the public. The Uffizi has had an Education Department for the past ten years, but the real growth in activities has been in the last five. A four-part series of public lectures and meetings, together with special school visits, was a major initiative held earlier in the year to explain the Gallery's collections and its history for the Florence public.

For the wider public, there are three main exhibitions: two in the Palazzo Vecchio, on the Florentine museums, and one in the Uffizi itself, of twentieth-century self-portraits. It also houses minor exhibitions - on its architectural history and on the conservation and restoration of works of art on paper. In the Gabinetto

Disegni. Rightly, the Gallery is there to be seen as usual; it is its own monument, but its rooms have been extensively restructured, greatly enhancing the experience of viewing.

The Uffizi's history goes back to 1560 when Duke Cosimo I de' Medici commissioned Vasari to design his administrative offices (*uffizi*), which were completed twenty years later by the architects Parigi and Buontalenti. In 1581, Francesco I started a museum on the second floor, where the Gallery is still located, with the brief of "in questo consorzio sceltissimo".

A later Medici, Cardinal Leopoldo, one of the first really systematic collectors, began a collection of self-portraits in 1664, which grew and came to be hung in the Vasari Corridor. Thus the collection of this relatively modern genre - it originates in the Renaissance itself - inspired the idea of soliciting and mounting an exhibition of twentieth-century self-portraits as the Uffizi's special celebration of itself.

Contributions came from all over the world, ranging from a simple pen-and-ink sketch by André Masson to the X-ray photo-collage by Rauschenberg, although Chagall, Guttuso, Manzù, Morandi, Regai and Siquieros.

The Palazzo Vecchio, too, has undergone a face-lift and structural overhaul for this year. *City of the Uffizi*, in the Salone dei Cinquecento, is a comprehensive display of exhibits from all of Florence's twenty museums and galleries, each with its own stand and didactic material. The aim is to show that the Uffizi Gallery was only a part of a far wider interest in both the arts and sciences, fostered and stimulated by the Medici and the later

Grand Dukes. The wealth of Florence's museums of science and natural history is relatively unknown, but they are among the oldest in the world, second only to those in Pisa. One can see early scientific instruments such as the first thermometer, an early calculating machine, a first edition of Galileo's *Works* and many scientific manuscripts as well as early anthropological and botanical collections. The archaeological museums are well represented by, among other things, the only known Etruscan bronze of the Late Hellenistic Age, the "Haranguer", which has belonged to Grand Ducal collections since 1566.

A revealing section of this complex exhibition is entitled "The Politics of Restoration in Florence", an attempt to draw attention to the numerous works of art which are not only gathering dust in deposits and vaults, but which are also badly in need of repair. Some of these wretched specimens, together with tragic photographs of past storage conditions, are on display beside gleamingly restored works and others which are in the process of restoration. Full information is given about all the museums and their exhibits, with an English language translation.

The *Method and Science* exhibition is devoted to the restoration of works in every kind of medium; the results, particularly with regard to major works, are totally satisfying. Antimatter's "Hercules and Anteus" from the fountain at the Villa di Castello, has undergone the same treatment for the reconstruction of water-based deposits as the Bronzes of

Riace. The verdigris patina has been preserved in the final cleaning and polishing; the mixture of age and gloss is very successful. A far more difficult task was the restoration of the ravaged Luca della Robbia lunette, "Madonna and Child, with Saints", from Urbino, which has been beautifully pieced together, with the addition of a new head for the Madonna. One also has the opportunity to see Donatello's "Judith and Holofernes" close to, and to see the famous spot where he used jute sacking in the moulding.

The showpiece of the whole exhibition is the newly restored "Primavera" by Botticelli. It was feared that the brown tones it had acquired were caused by a permanent chemical change in the greens used. However, after a battery of scientific tests, this was discovered not to be the case: it was simply dirt. Now the richness of the colour of the botanical detail of the carpet of flowers and the delicacy and texture of the clothing are brilliantly clear. More interestingly, it appears that the little grove where the figures stand or dance is a knoll surrounded by a hilly landscape, which nestles under the clear blue sky; now visible through the trees.

All the exhibitions will continue to the end of the year. In September there will be an International Study Conference on the Uffizi, and a new photographic exhibition, *The Image of the Uffizi*. A "Project Florence" has also been initiated, first to make an appraisal of resources, well under way, and then to execute a comprehensive plan of restoration, according to which an entire overhaul of the city's treasures should be complete by 1986, so marking the start of its new life as a "city-museum" complex.

New Oxford books: Literature

Love and Marriage

Three Stories
Daisy and Angela Ashford
Illustrated by
Ralph Steadman with
a new introduction
by Humphrey Carpenter

The Young Visitors, written when Daisy Ashford was nine, was an instant bestseller and has continued to delight generations of readers. Daisy and her sister Angela wrote other hilarious stories, and this volume contains three of their best. Like *The Young Visitors* they deal with love, marriage, and the social toiles of the adult world, and are written with the same charm and mordant perception. £1.95
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The Scholar - The Gypsy -
The Priest
George Borrow

George Borrow always loved the unconventional, the wildness of the haath, life on the open road. His taste for outlandish places and mysterious characters led him into some quixotic adventures, many of which he described in *Lavengro*. £3.50
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British Literary Travelling
between the Wars
Paul Fussell

Abroad is an exemplary piece of criticism. It is immensely readable. It bristles with ideas. It disinters a real lost masterpiece from the literary attic. It admits a whole area of writing - at least - to its proper place in literary history. Jonathan Reben in *Quarto*. Paul Fussell's celebration of British writers on travel is now available in paperback. Illustrated £2.95
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Gilbert White's Year

Selected by
John Commander

Gilbert White's detailed journals provide the characters and setting for his *Natural History of Selborne*. In this book John Commander has arranged selections from White's work in a composite sequence to tell White's perennial interests within the framework of the year and its seasons. The book is illustrated with numerous pictures closely related to the text. £2.95
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Richard Jefferies

Richard Jefferies' last essays have all the beauty and freshness of his earlier writing, and his keenness of observation. But they also have a greater poignancy stemming from his longing to "drink the wind" when he could only watch the birds from his window during his years of painful illness, and from his loneliness. £2.95
Oxford Paperbacks

Oxford University Press

John is 12

to the editor

Hannah Arendt

Sir, — Ernest Gellner's review of Elisabeth Young-Bruhl's biography of Hannah Arendt (August 6) cannot be allowed to pass without comment, since it gives an erroneous impression of the achievement of both Hannah Arendt and her biographer.

Speaking as a reader who has bothered to "check the voluminous notes", I wish the reviewer had checked the Preface. If he had, he would have avoided some obvious errors of fact. First, Gellner says that Arendt's date of birth is not mentioned in the book. However, *Hannah Arendt* has it in black and white (p xvii).

The earliest document in the papers Arendt left behind begins: "Hannah Arendt was born on Sunday evening at quarter past nine, on October 14, 1916. The birth took twenty-two hours and went normally. The child weighed 3,695 grams (8lbs. 4oz.) at birth. With these sentences Mortha Cohn Arendt began to set down her daughter's story and this remarkable record, entitled *Unser Kind* ('Our Child'), is the main written source of information about Arendt's childhood.

It may be unorthodox — though I myself do not think it so — to put an important fact like this in a preface, but here it leaves the biographer free to begin with a description of Königsberg, a strategy of which Gellner (rightly) approves.

Second, Gellner complains of the "curious lifelessness" of the account of the love-affair between Heidegger and Arendt, and states: "It is not entirely clear whether Young-Bruhl has had access to these [Heidegger-Arendt] letters." However, in the Preface, when talking about the correspondence she has seen, Young-Bruhl says specifically: "I have consulted them all except the Heidegger correspondence, which is closed to scholars." This is, of course, an intolerable handicap for a biographer. But Gellner has no grounds for relying on her subject's testimony. A biographer ought reasonably at least to be expected to explicate her subject's thoughts and feelings sympathetically. And it is not as though Young-Bruhl herself were uncritical. In the Preface, she writes:

From versions of a story not significantly different, I have woven a single story for this book and cut loose threads away. In these cases, the criteria familiar to historians — and detectives — have been employed in the weaving: inner consistency and plausibility, conformity with written sources, other stories, and documents; reliability of the storyteller in terms of vantage point and knowledge. In those few instances where irreconcilable versions of stories exist, I have noted all the versions.

Third, Gellner complains that the index fails to mention Hayek, Popper, and Tolman in connection with the question of the origins of totalitarianism. Again, in the Preface, Young-Bruhl points out that she is writing biography and not political theory: "From the rich Arendt Papers and from what my informants have told me, I have taken only what my project, a philosophical biography, required. . . . I have tried to show how she came to her concerns, her subjects, how she went about making — and remaking — her books, and how she thought her way from one book to the next." Indeed, a similar kind of question could with greater justification be asked of Gellner: why he omits an influence at least the equal of Heidegger's, namely Karl Jaspers? For nothing, that correspondence is documented; in neither they demand parity of treatment in a review. For if (according to Gellner) Arendt only might have been the passion of Heidegger's life, Jaspers without a doubt fulfilled her need for a father-figure.

This serious omission leads on to a further and more substantial criticism concerning the Enlightenment-

Romanticism antithesis which Gellner has superimposed on the biography. There is no room here to deal with all the turns of Gellner's argument. Quite simply the historian of ideas should protest at the simplistic identification of the Enlightenment with Kant or Romanticism with Volksgemeinschaft (Gellner is aware of the risks in this latter case but presses on undeterred), even though one takes his point about the ensis of identity these movements could imply for German Jews. Gellner cannot simply dismiss the real hope for tolerance and human rights in Lessing and Herder, nor ignore Kant's contemporary critics such as Herder, Jacobi, Jean Paul, and Kleist, who detected the moral relativism of his philosophy and its devaluation of the "lived world".

Furthermore, it is a slur to conceive of Arendt's affair with Heidegger as a courtship with a lethal, because antisemitic, Romanticism or to enlure her adherence to German culture as "logically incoherent compromise". For if sinister tendencies latent in the Enlightenment and in Romanticism merely cost Arendt her life in the Nazi period, there was indeed a more life-enhancing tendency within the same movements which inspired her with hope, namely *Erlebensphilosophie*. "Heidegger's philosophy represents the scholasticism, the final anatomy, of the Romantic individual" (William Barrett, quoted in Zilkowski, *The Novels of Hermann Hesse*). Certainly, Arendt's poems, her social non-conformism show that she saw herself as such an individual from her earliest youth: from the time of her stay in Berlin where she heard Gunderich lecture on Kierkegaard, and before she went to Marburg and met Heidegger. But, on the other hand, as a counter-balance to Heidegger, there was the more rationalistic, more conventionally humanistic philosophy of Jaspers with its debt, amongst others, to Kant, and to which Arendt pays eloquent tribute in *Men in Dark Times*. Would that Gellner had followed his own advice to Young-Bruhl over her treatment of the Arendt-Heidegger affair and weighed statements against speaker in his concluding sentences. He would not then have shown deplorable lack of taste in comparing the Nazi jargon of *Meine Ehre ist meine Ehre* with the sign of Truth, which is most emphatically, not only "one of Young-Bruhl's chapter headings", but an utterance by Karl Jaspers himself.

Hannah Arendt's German Jewishness was both a privilege and a fate. As a privilege it, combined with her intellectual precociousness and her concern for world history, provided her with a unique life-long philosophical task. As a fate it gave her an insight into her times which neither an independent German such as Jaspers could command in 1933 at the cost, later, of imminent transportation, nor an assimilated Jew such as Stefan Zweig had, who was entirely devoted to European culture and paid for it with his suicide in 1942. Hence the illogicalities and ambivalences in her attitudes to German culture and politics which Gellner deplores. It is precisely these ambivalences which make Arendt's life a parable in a far deeper way than the unsuspected by Gellner. Perhaps, in the age of Kant, as Gellner seems to imply, when the philosopher could become a universal mind within the limits of the city, the philosopher's life and the logical development of his ideas could be of a piece. But, as Arendt knew, the treacherous, unpredictable modern age was quite different. Her life, like that of others in her predicament such as Bruch or Benjamin, her friends, needed to be told, because it is an actual demonstration of Nietzsche's prophetic description of the modern existential dilemma of man: "der merkwürdige Gegensatz seines inneren, dem kein Inneres entspricht, ein Gegensatz, den die alten Griechen nicht kennen." And this is why, as an eloquent of a modern life, Elisabeth Young-Bruhl's biography of Hannah Arendt needs readers.

from outside the narrow academic sphere of political thought.

MARTIN L. DAVIES,
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In Defence of Swinburne

Sir, — Mr review (July 16) of L. M. Findlay's selection of Swinburne's poetry began from the premise that modern readers — whose touchstones of poetic worth tend to be Hardy or Pound or both (my "us" was meant to be no more exclusive than this) — would find Swinburne's work difficult to approach. I tried to show, within the space a review allows, that both poets owed something to Swinburne, and that this was a reason for our not dismissing his poetry out of hand.

G. Singh (Letters, August 6) seems to wish that I had simply paraphrased T. S. Eliot's essay — this would surely have been a pointless exercise, but, as Singh indicates, Eliot did write that Swinburne was diffuse and I did spend about a quarter of my review trying to account for this diffuseness. I did not claim that all Swinburne's verse is worthless, as Singh seems to imply, simply that L. M. Findlay has missed out much that is valuable and included much that is "diffuse" to the point of unintelligibility.

I do not understand Professor Singh's last point at all; having vigorously defended Swinburne he quotes a passage in defence of Pound (whom I was not attacking) which suggests that Swinburne's adjectives are often virtually meaningless. My point exactly. Why is Singh so angry?

DICK DAVIS.

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School Stories

Sir, — It was gratifying to read in Humphrey Carpenter's review of *The Hells of Tom Brown* (July 23) a reference to the *Hospur* and similar "story papers" as neither of the other reviews I had previously read considered these omissions in Isabel Quigley's book worth mentioning. Carpenter also observes, after discussing the extent of the popularity of the English school story, that "there is, really, no great mystery about it. Those who attended English public schools as late as 1960 inhabited a world not very far removed from that of Tom Brown. . . . Perhaps in this context there is no great mystery but there are — and I speak with some feeling — other contexts."

My father, a joiner, read the *Magnus* and similar boys' papers; a household where for days on end there wasn't even a slice of bread to eat. A generation later I read, not only the *Magnus*, but almost every

type of school story and related literature, from Teddy Lester and the "sub-genre" *Adventure, Wizard, Rover, Hotsprir, Skipper to The Education of Giles and Esmond Romilly*. Like my father I was educated, up to the age of fourteen, at the toughest, though academically excellent, elementary school in the most poverty-stricken part of an industrial town in the most depressed part of England at the time of soup kitchens, the Jarrow Mareli and a war-maimed generation. If, then, there is a "mystery", or at least an interesting psychological phenomenon, it is that people like us should have been so seduced by the strange goings-on at Rugby, Greyfriars, The Rad Circle and the myriad other schools which, however lacking in verisimilitude, aroused such quasi-sexual yearning.

Almost all my school-story reading was done while I was at elementary school and, if it is true that I might have read a little more than some of my contemporaries, all those around me, including the poorest, delighted in reading about a world which could have hardly been more different from their own: "Stepping out of the Bentley and carefully adjusting his monocle he looked upwards, beyond the school gates. 'So this is Wimmering; what a very imposing edifice.'"

This is a far cry from — to take an equally random example from life at my first school — the scrupulously clean, elegantly dressed schoolmistress slowly rotating one of my filthy, less fortunate classmates in a ghastly display that would have been destructively humiliating had we been allowed to be aware of such levels of sophistication.

A far cry, perhaps, but there are disturbing similarities. The English school, whether mine or Tom Brown's, was, on one profoundly unavourable level, a very English phenomenon. And yet, in our different ways, how we all must have loved it. There's a body of literature to prove it.

R. WATSON.

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Anti-Communists in China

Sir, — J. A. Fyfield writes (August 6) to put right my careless oversight when reviewing (May 21) his book on Chinese Communist "re-education". He is right; they were inexcusable, and I am sorry. But he goes on to reaffirm his sanguine conclusion that brainwashing through hard labour in China has not "broken the spirit" of the fighters against Communist arms who he found now acquiesced in their brainwashers'

tion. Not at all a punitive process. After I had written my review, Fyfield announced that the last few thousand Nationalists "still sent me and encouraged to go to Taiwan (if their families are there), because they have 'turned over a new leaf' and their release would 'make a good impression at home [which includes Taiwan] and abroad'. My previous interpretation of the aim as being the preparation of agents for propaganda in the unification campaign is borne out by that. Is J. A. Fyfield's book regarded as part of the 'good impression abroad'?"

DENNIS DUNCANSON,
Little Ansford, Duckpit Lane, Petham, Canterbury.

Nootka Indians

Sir, — No sooner has the British Museum sorted out its *Archaeological Curator* from the Northwest Coast of America than Redmond O'Hanlon jumbles them again. His review (July 23) seems to make all these things Eskimo. For example, the "demanding and capacious eroticism" of the Nootka woman never served as a distraction for any Eskimo "in the long night of the Arctic winter": the Nootka Indians lived at the same latitude as Dieppe.

JOHN WARDROPER,
60 St Paul's Road, London N1.

Counter-tenors

Sir, — In a series of letters, mostly concerning William Hawes, in the Cambridge University Library there is a note from one James Huxford to R. M. Bacon, of Norwich, a friend of Hawes, somewhat relevant to the current discussion (Letters, July 2).

Of William Knyvett — "for upwards of 40 years he was principal alto at the best London concert and all the provincial festivals" (Quaker editions 1-6 — Harrison and Sons, 1840) — Huxford writes: "His natural voice is a contralto, but his good sense told him he would succeed best if he could work it up to an alto, that voice having been very scarce for some years. By indomitable industry he made it sweet and useful, though very feeble. . . . (June 20, 1820: CUL Add MS 625 63).

PERCY M. YOUNG.

72 Clark Road, Wolverhampton.

Chaliapin

Sir, — If, as Julia Kavanagh says in her review (July 9) of Bronislava Nijinska's *Early Memoirs*, Chaliapin was a tenor, Clara Butt was a contralto soprano.

STANLEY WELLS,
Midsummer Cottage, Church Lane, Beckley, Oxfordshire.

Among this week's contributors

RICHARD BROWN is the co-editor of the *James Joyce Broadsheet*.

ROBERT BURCHFIELD is Editor in Chief of the Oxford English Dictionary.

MORTON N. COHEN is Emeritus Professor of English at City University, New York.

ERIK DE MAUNY was the BBC's Moscow Correspondent, 1963-66 and 1972-74.

GAVIN EWART's *The Collected Ewart 1933-1980* was published last year.

EVA GILLIES is a former lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

VICTORIA GLANONNINO's biography of Edith Sitwell was published in 1981.

JULIE HANKEY's theatre-historical edition of *Richard III* was published last year.

JOSEPH HONA's books include *Gone Tomorrow*, 1982.

JAMES HUNTER is the author of *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 1976.

JAMES KIRKUP teaches Comparative Literature at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Japan.

J. R. MADDOCK is a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford.

CHARLES MARTINDALE is a lecturer in Classical and Medieval Studies at the University of Sussex.

GEOFFREY MARSHALL's books include *Constitutional Theory*, 1971.

WOLF MENOL is a lecturer in War Studies at King's College, London.

PAULA NAUSS's novel *All Girls Together* was published in 1979.

SIR WALTER OAKESHOTT was Headmaster of Winchester College from 1946 to 1954.

NATURAL HISTORY

Ground-to-air sightings

Redmond O'Hanlon

JAN FLEGG (Editor)
A Notebook of Birds 1907-1980
184pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0 353 30880 8

J. T. R. SHARROCK (Editor)
The Frontiers of Bird Identification:
A British Birds Guide to Some
Difficult Species
272pp. Macmillan. £8.95.
0 353 23708 0

IAN WALLACE
Birdwatching in the Seventies
183pp. Macmillan. £7.95.
0 353 30026 2

Jan Flegg's anthology of notes and letters from seventy-three years of the monthly journal *British Birds* is delightfully illustrated, well organized, gracefully coerced into near-cohesion by his own authoritative commentary and densely packed with observations of aberrant bird behaviour, debates about migration, reports of amateur experiments in the field and records of first sightings. He begins with a poignant reminder of the peaceful measures of bird watching. A letter from France published in the journal in 1915 reports

a Willow-Wren at a point on a road about one mile east of Poperinghe. Swallows were also just on the outskirts of the same town. Chaffinches are quite numerous, and sing lustily when there is no commanding. However, when the hedges are flying about, all the birds seem to realise that the ground is the only safe place for them, and accordingly they seek cover in the lowest parts of the hedges. . . . The wet meadows in the salient always seemed full of Comcraques at night, and in one wood . . . there was always a chorus of birds at dawn. . . . In spite of the rifle fire on three sides. . . and once a Kingfisher appeared from nowhere and settled by a "Johnson hole" within five yards of our trench.

Do birds enjoy themselves? You have only to take a "good look at a subsiding Blackbird, eyes half-closed, wings and tail outspread in abandoned luxury", or at two kestrels playing falcon with a cardboard sheet sprawling high over London in a midsummer thermal, (but anting and smoke-bathing, despite appearances, are less simply hysterical). And how high do they fly? Well, on "29 July 1955 Pilot Officer A. L. Carley, R.A.F., on a flight over Northamptonshire, flew into a flock of about six Curlews (Numerus arquata) at 4,500 feet. One of the birds was later found impaled on the aircraft. . . . But theo on December 9, 1967, Air Traffic Control

in Northern Ireland discovered a radar echo moving south with a ground speed of seventy-five knots and a height reading of 26,000-28,000 feet; which seemed so very high for birds that an aircraft was sent to intercept. The pilot reported a "flock of about 30 swans" at just over 27,000 feet; twenty-seven kilometres out from Lough Foyle they began their descent approach to earth.

Still, by far the most remarkable series of notes and letters here selected (in a volume which includes R.S.R. Pitter, Setoo Oordon, R.M. Lockley, E.G.B. Meade-Waldo, James Fisher and Niko Tinbergen amongst its contributors) and even by comparison with competing topics as intriguing as the contamination of ravens by fulmar oil; a tawny owl attacking a fox in winter; the persecution of migrating short-toed eagles by resident peregrines at Gibraltar; a snake-like great tit killing and bearing off a goldcrest or, again, these tiny unfortunate, in search of a drink, being dragged down beneath the water-bosmen to the muddy depths of a pond by crocodilian edible frogs; and clearly exceeding, in suggestive pleasure in the imagination, even the rook given to cartwheeling round telegraph wires — is the debate about a long-continuing mystery whose eventual solution was gratifyingly more unexpected than the wildest conjectures which it generated.

In an aerial reversal of Gilbert White's half-belief that swallows slept out the winter at the bottom of lakes and rivers; to a near-justification of the poetic assumption in natural history that *Parusdom apoda*, the birds of paradise, were not without legs and feet not because the native exporters of the Malay Archipelago cut them from the skins but because, circling the sun in their long and iridescent feathers, they had no need of such mundanities, our own familiar swifts, it seems, for up to three years, from England to Africa and back, may hunt insects, roost, play and mate way above the clouds and down the great winds of the high atmosphere without once touching the ground.

For an unscholarly, early account of the pursuit of the swift by aircraft and glider ("I encountered one at 7,500 feet, and for half a minute circled round him as he soared. . . from that height, the bird and I could see the long line of the south coast sweeping in a bold curve from misty Start Point to the snake's head of Portland") one must turn to Harold Penrose's hauntingly memorable little book, *I Flew with a Bird* (1949). The *Frontiers of Bird* is a book on the other hand, another welcome attraction from *British Birds*, brings the full weight of scholarly apparatus to bear, for example, upon the occurrence of the dowitcher, a birdwatcher-bewitcher if ever there was one, which also happens to be a type of redshank, reasonably plentiful in Alaska, where it breeds, and to cause no especial excitement along the east coast of North America, to which it migrates. It is distinctly regrettable, however, that no benign hurricane has yet whirled the wrong way across Europe and brought us the Asiatic dowitcher as a present for the British List. The classification of various races is confused, too — in fact it is not at all certain which dowitcher it is, and it is a matter of sharp annoyance that "no *ex machina* has appeared to assist with Dowitcher identification."

In a paper on the field identification of dusky and Radde's warblers, "the somewhat similar Smoky Warbler *Phylloscopus fulviventris*", confined to the eastern Himalayas and Tibet, is likewise rebuked for its parochial habits, for "undertaking only limited and mainly altitudinal movements"



"The Fox and the Eagle", a version by Francis Barlow (?1626-1704) of the Aesop fable. Barlow's paintings and engravings were principally of animal and sporting subjects; this study, executed in pen and black ink with grey wash, is one of the plates in the Ashmolean Museum's Catalogue of the Collection of Drawings: Volume IV, The Earlier British Drawings, British Artists and Foreigners Working in Britain before c. 1775, compiled by David Blayney Brown (1971), with 60 black-and-white plates and 503 plates on microfiche. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £30. 0 19 817375 X1.

and "its potential as a wild vagrant to Europe may be safely taken as nil." However, among such rare resignations (the "far-off bird disappearing rapidly into the darkening gloom of a winter afternoon will always have to go down as 'unidentified grey goose'") and the occasional stem warning ("it should be noted that the occurrence of runt Dunlins close in size to Western Sandpipers can mislead even the most experienced: one such observer was baffled by this problem for eight hours") there are many compensatory excitements ("suddenly they turned head-on to us and showed instantly the prominent double supercilium of Broad-billed Sandpipers *Limicola falcinellus*"), much specialized travel reporting ("On 9 April we passed through a community of Indian Sand

whilst walking along a beach in south-west Anglesey I saw five Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* and a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* feeding on what I at first took to be a pig washed up by the tide and partly covered by wind-blown sand. When I reached the object, however, I discovered that it was a human corpse which had been in the water for some considerable length of time. The birds had been feeding on the facial muscles and the neck. I should perhaps add that I actually saw the Turnstones tearing off small shreds of flesh after the Carrion Crow had removed some bigger pieces; there was therefore no doubt that they were feeding on the corpse itself and not on sandhoppers or other invertebrates attracted to this food source.

Too tidy by half.

James Hunter

PETER MARREN
A Natural History of Aberdeen
184pp. Robin Callender, Havghend, Fifteen, Aberdeenshire. £4.95.
0 907 184 03 0

Aberdeen, or so its city council proclaims tirelessly, has two contrasting claims to national renown. One is to be found in the town's role as "Europe's Offshore Capital"; the place, at the centre of the North Sea oil business. The other, we are assured, lies in the city's undeniably decorative appearance: its parks; its tree-lined streets; its endless beds of roses. These are the attributes which make this cold, grey, granite-built Scottish seaport the winner of so many "Britain in Bloom" awards that local councillors eventually agreed to withdraw from the annual contest to give their southern rivals some chance of success. Peter Marren, a naturalist who works for the Nature Conservancy Council in Aberdeen, believes that the

city's surviving wildlife is as much threatened by the roses as by the oil industry. True, the breakneck expansion precipitated by the oil boom has resulted in many previously unspoiled corners being swamped by warehouses, factories, dual carriageways and all the other manifestations of Aberdeen's recent prosperity. But equally inimical to birds and beasts, in Marren's opinion, is the local authority's obsession with tidiness. Vast expanses of mown grass and shorn shrubs may gladden the heart of a Britain in Bloom judging panel; but they do nothing, for a migratory warbler or flycatcher in desperate need of shelter.

Despite its accounts of disasters that could have been avoided by a more imaginative approach to town planning, this is a cheerful and a convincing book. Marren is a scientist who writes lightly without recourse to jargon; and he has an unflinching eye for the ludicrous. His delight, for instance, in an official report on a proposed country park — "The traditional picnic can sometimes be an uncomfortable experience," noted the

report. "A much more civilized note", it continued, could be struck by the provision of "recreational furniture" of a "suitably rural design". The park, Marren concludes, "was to be a townsman's Arcadia, a countryside tamed and modified for mass enjoyment."

Despite his exposure of officialdom's failings, Marren does not despair for the future. Only an optimistic, after all, could write a natural history of the United Kingdom's major growth centre. A more despondent spirit would be inclined to assume that wildlife and cities are mutually exclusive. Much has been lost: the bears, wolves and deer that roamed Aberdeen's now vanished forests or seven centuries ago; the dunes which have been drained; the moorland which has been built on; the billside which has become a municipal rubbish dump. But, much has survived: oystercatchers nest on the flat gravel-covered roofs of concrete towerblocks. Wild flowers still bloom on the banks of the River Dee and Don. Here and there, even within the city limits, a fragment of wilderness endures.

Arbor lights

Jean Mellanby

The Macdonald Encyclopedia of Trees
518pp. Macdonald. £4.95.
0 356 08574 0

This comprehensive volume, translated from the original Italian edition published in 1977, and edited now for the United States, suffers from the excessive claims made for it on the cover. Without identification keys it is not a field guide and it contains the perfectly circular statement that "to identify a plant you need only know the names of the genus and the species." Forsters might find it useful, though it is not a book for gardeners. But it does contain detailed botanical notes on 300 species, including some chosen rather idiosyncratically, of the colour plates, only one or two have gone seriously wrong in colour reproduction, such as that of the jacaranda. Most trees are illustrated in shape and leaf in line drawings, and there is a glossary. Interesting odd details are often included: the bark of *Magnolia*

grandiflora is said to be the source of a tonic against worms and rheumatism, and the tropical American *Bixa orellana* yields a yellow substance used to colour butter and cheese. The introduction attempts to cover too much ground — the history of trees, a cursory survey of ecosystems, reproduction, etymology, and so forth.

The really serious weakness of the book is the division of 300 trees of the world into six groups: conifers, palms, broadleaves (sic), fruit, flowering trees and trees of economic importance. It is difficult to see how any tree can be either fruit or flower; perhaps the translator had problems and resorted to ornamentation. Instead of flowering trees, but the lines of demarcation simply do not work. Among the trees of economic importance, readers will be surprised to find none of the major timber trees but others such as quinine, calabash, mandarin and *Nux. vomica* together with tea, cocoa, coffee and rubber. The general effect of what should have been a thoroughly professional job is confused and amateurish; particularly sad when one considers the detailed and often available for the production.

JHE 10 1982

Takeover bids

C. M. Woodhouse

JOHN C. LOULIS

The Greek Communist Party 1940-1944
224pp. Croom Helm. £12.50.
0 7099 16124

LAURENCE S. WITNER

American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949
445pp. Columbia University Press.
\$25.90.
0 231 04196 9

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) made three attempts to seize power by force, besides other attempts by infiltration. What was known as the first round took place in 1943-44, both in German-occupied Greece and among the armed forces in Egypt. The second took place in Athens, after liberation, in December 1944. The third was the civil war of 1946-49. As can be seen from the dates in the titles of these two books, John Loulis covers the first two rounds and Lawrence Witner covers all three, though only the third in depth.

Loulis is a representative of a new wave of young Greek historians who see no point in pretending that the National Liberation Front (ELAM) was anything other than a creature of the KKE. This simple truth has failed to percolate to many middle-aged Western historians, to whom his book is therefore warmly to be recommended. They should also be warned that he is equally representative of an older wave of historians to whom most of their predecessors are dunces.

His advantage is that he has had

access to Greek Communist documents and reminiscences as well as published and unpublished British and American records. One could hardly want more. His account of the genesis of the KKE and EAM is convincing, and he has a sound grasp of the principles and objectives of British policy. It is interesting to find a young Greek, whose sympathies probably lie with EAM, writing with unequaled objectivity about the Greek Communists and even going out of his way to find excuses for their opponents, such as Zervos and Papandreu.

Where he does not carry complete conviction is in his confident analysis of internal relations within the KKE leadership. He rejects the notion that there were divergences of policy between hard-liners and moderates, or any other factions within the party. On inspection, his argument turns out to mean little more than that, on the two or three areas of policy which he examines, there was invariably agreement between the two men who dominated the party, Siantos and Ioannidis.

Even for this rather narrow refutation of a wider hypothesis, Loulis relies largely on the memoirs of Ioannidis, for Siantos died mysteriously thirty-five years ago and was later denounced as a traitor. Loulis is too young to have talked with more than a handful of war-time Communists, and one or two of those he interviewed were too junior to be privy to top-level secrets. Some of those now dead, such as Tzimas, might have given him a different impression.

If the leadership of the KKE was really unanimous throughout the German occupation, it was the only time in the party's history that this happened. Before the war, as Loulis shows, the party was in continuous,

often comical disarray. After the war its leaders quarrelled in the 1950s over the Tito-Stalin dispute and in the 1960s over the Sino-Soviet dispute. In the 1970s they split into two distinct parties.

Whether the leadership really remained of one mind throughout the German occupation remains doubtful. Loulis provides some new evidence that he did not, although he takes an opposite view himself. At least two leading Communists seem to have opposed the decision to acquiesce in the return of British forces in September 1944; and Ioannidis himself had reservations about the decision to launch the December rising, which was taken in his absence.

One cannot dissent from Loulis's main thesis, however, which is that the KKE had several opportunities of gaining power either by infiltration or by confrontation, but missed them through misadventures. This is a careful and thorough, if rather self-satisfied, account of a complex and crucial period in Greek history.

Professor Witner's study of the American intervention is also careful and thorough, but far from self-satisfied. He has clearly been shocked by what he discovered about US policy between 1947 and 1950. He judges it to have been a disastrous failure, not only because twenty-five years later the Americans were the most unpopular of all foreigners in Greece but also because the supposed success of the intervention led to similar errors of policy in Vietnam and elsewhere.

Witner examines the American intervention under different heads, chapter by chapter: in politics, in military operations, in economic policy, in the trade unions, and so on. In every case he is severely critical both of the US Missions and of the Greek

government of the day. He also studies the international context, from the first assumption of a Soviet conspiracy which led to the Truman Doctrine down to the belated realization that Stalin knew little about Greece and cared less. His conclusion is that the intervention was motivated principally by concern over oil supplies from the Middle East, and based on "erroneous facts".

Much of his argument is unchallengeable, being based on US official documents. But he is handicapped by knowing too little about the KKE and its allies. His criticisms are sometimes ungenerous and not always fully informed. He finds it wrong of the Greek government to have arrested such distinguished people as the two republican officers, Saraphis and Bakirdizis, and the wife of Professor Svolos; but he seems

unaware that all three were members of the KKE. At the time most people were unaware of it, but perhaps the government was not, nor the American Mission or the Greek authorities for their tolerance in allowing known Communists to sit in their seats in Parliament less than a year after the end of the civil war.

Witner's story is a melancholy one, but perhaps not so bad as he himself makes it out. American unpopularity in Greece is likely to be a passing phase; but the technique devised in Greece was mistaken but because the circumstances were utterly different. In my case it would be valuable to have the other side of the third round subjected to the same stringent analysis which Loulis has applied to the first two rounds.

Promises of expansion

Dankwart A. Rustow

JACOB M. LANDAU

Pan-Turkism in Turkey: A Study of Irredentism
219pp. Hurst. £11.50.
0 955838 5 2

"A sick man", Tsar Nicholas called the Ottoman sultan in 1853, but soon the disease was to catch up with the Habsburg emperors in Vienna and Nicholas's own heirs in St Petersburg. Everywhere the ideals of enlightenment, material progress, and self-determination were challenging religious orthodoxy and absolute hereditary rule. The first to espouse nationalism were compactly settled subject-groups such as Poles, Serbs, Czechs and Greeks, followed later by dissident aristocrats and imperial ruling groups: Austrians, Hungarians, Russians and Ottoman Turks. On this shifting ideological scene, Pan-Turkism championed the cause of the Turkic-speaking Muslims of the Tsarist empire - Tatars, Azeris, Kazakhs, Turkmens, Uzbeks and many others - and their cultural links with Ottoman Turkey.

Jacob M. Landau, a political scientist at the Hebrew University and an authority on modern Turkey, traces the origins of the movement in Russia and its later evolution in Turkey. Future historians are indebted to Landau for the more than 1,000 footnotes and extensive bibliography that record his diligent researches in the libraries of Istanbul and Ankara and the archives of London and Bonn.

His narrative provides vivid glimpses of the social tensions and political reversals that shape the course of ideology. Pan-Turkism started as "a response to Pan-Slavism and... pressures [of Russification]. Linguistic reformers such as Ismail Gasprinsky were proud to see the gradual rise of their secular Turkic-Tatar curriculum excel at Russian and European universities above those of the older Koranic schools. In Istanbul refugees from Russia joined with Ottoman intellectuals such as the lexicographer Semtin Sami and the novelist Halide Edib in extolling the culture and history of the Turks of Central Asia. In 1904 an article by Gasprinsky's friend Yusuf Akpura contrasted Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkism as the rival ideologies of the day.

The "Young Turks" who seized power in 1908 felt no strong commitment to Ottomanism or the deposed sultan's Pan-Islam. When Albania and Macedonia were lost in the war of 1912-13, some of them consoled themselves with fantasies of conquest in the east, and the collapse of the Tsarist regime seemed to bring such dreams within reach.

Instead there followed what Landau calls the "latent stage" of Pan-Turkism. In Russia the Bolsheviks combined linguistic autonomy with ruthless political centralization to reunite most of the tsar's domains. In Turkey, Kemal Atatürk availed the threat of colonial partition, built

up his republic as a Westernized nation-state, cultivated friendly relations with the Soviet Union and other neighbours, and indulged a Pan-Turkism only as a linguistic, not a political, programme. Landau might have added that even Atatürk's "history thesis", which was the most humane utilization of the work of relevant Joyce critics like David Hayman and Hugh Kenner and terms from Stephen Ullmann, Dorrit Cohn, Wayne Booth, Wolfgang Iser and Roland Barthes.

She argues, first of all, that there is a fairly conventional third-person narrative voice in the first episodes of *Ulysses*. Divergences from it are applicable in terms of the characters present, either as interior monologue or as a kind of narration in which the idiom of a character is adopted by the narrator, in a manner that will be familiar to readers of Joyce since *Dubliners*. In the "Aeolus" episode, however, the reader is confronted with those unending "boldfaced phrases" (she means upper-case phrases but let it pass) which are not explicable as the thoughts or utterances of any of the characters present or as the direct expression of an impersonal narrator. At this point *Ulysses* "begins to advertise its own artifice" and play language-games which seem to confirm Jacques Derrida's insistence on the problematic separation of writing from the authorial consciousness.

Internal requirements

Richard Brown

KAREN LAWRENCE

The Odyssey of Style in "Ulysses"
229pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £13.10.
0 691 06487 3

Questions of narrative and style have always been of the utmost importance in the criticism of *Ulysses* but they have never been properly settled. Perhaps, as Karen Lawrence suggests, we have found it easier to seek out coherent mythic and symbolic structures than to confront *Ulysses* on the level of narrative style, where its fundamental discontinuities become most apparent. Perhaps, also, the critical technology that was available before the recent outpour in literary theory was too blunt to account for the considerable complexity of Joyce's achievement in this area.

Karen Lawrence is admirably liberated from such constraints. She has purged herself of received assumptions about myth and symbols in Joyce and, in their place, she guards an armoury of recent theoretical terminology, which includes the most of relevant Joyce critics like David Hayman and Hugh Kenner and terms from Stephen Ullmann, Dorrit Cohn, Wayne Booth, Wolfgang Iser and Roland Barthes.

She argues, first of all, that there is a fairly conventional third-person narrative voice in the first episodes of *Ulysses*. Divergences from it are applicable in terms of the characters present, either as interior monologue or as a kind of narration in which the idiom of a character is adopted by the narrator, in a manner that will be familiar to readers of Joyce since *Dubliners*. In the "Aeolus" episode, however, the reader is confronted with those unending "boldfaced phrases" (she means upper-case phrases but let it pass) which are not explicable as the thoughts or utterances of any of the characters present or as the direct expression of an impersonal narrator. At this point *Ulysses* "begins to advertise its own artifice" and play language-games which seem to confirm Jacques Derrida's insistence on the problematic separation of writing from the authorial consciousness.

Not to be trusted

Imre Salusinszky

WILLIAM RIGGAN

Picaros, Madmen, Naïfs, and Clowns: The Unreliable First-Person Narrator
266pp. University of Oklahoma Press. \$14.95.
0 8061 1714 1

Picaros, Madmen, Naïfs, and Clowns discusses cases of unreliable narration, with many examples ranging from Lucius Apuleius to Saul Bellow, where a fictional autobiographer recounts his life "in a conscious act of writing".

The analysis is organized under the four types of narrator mentioned in the title. "Picaros" like Auggie March and "clowns" like Shandy tend toward conscious dissimulation or self-deceit. "Madmen" and "naïfs" have far less control over their own tales. An unhinged narrator, like Fanny's Clegg, gives us merely a "reflection of his own twisted perceptions, confused thought patterns, or neurotic obsessions". Naïfs like Huck Finn or Holden Caulfield see less than they actually tell, and unlike the other three types, evade the signs of the socialities which their narratives implicitly condemn.

William Riggan, it will be seen, employs Wayne Booth's distinction between a narrator and the more reliable "implied author" behind him, constructed by the reader. The implied narrative is used to convey the implied author's veneration or at least serious critique of given social norms and practices.

Rhetorical figures abound in the episode, suggesting that the writing has begun to move by its own internal, formal requirements rather than by the needs of conveying character and action. Joyce, we are told, gives his readers a breather in "Cestrygonians" and "Scylla and Charybdis", reverting to something like the norm of narrative plus a stream of consciousness, but in "Wandering Rocks" and "Sirens" he returns to his old tricks and the stylistic extravaganzas of the later chapters is begun in earnest.

Lawrence takes each of these later chapters in turn, from the parodic intrusions which help to deflate the bombast of the named narrator of the "Cyclops" episode, through the sub-editor's nightmare of cliché and redundancy in "Eumaeus", to the surprising reconciliation of character and narrative idiom in "Penelope". Her investigations are detailed, original and interesting and include such well-observed novelties as the notion that many of the later stylistic modes are anticipated in aspects of earlier ones.

Ulysses is shown as a concerted and subversive enquiry into the nature of narrative writing. It is held to respond to modern anxieties about the impossibility of containing the multiplicity of life within a narrative fiction and to modern suspicions of rhetoric and style. It is not, however, seen as an entirely depressing book which attests to the futility of all language, but rather as one in which Joyce's own enormous linguistic virtuosity gives us a sense of expanding possibilities, even if none of these possibilities can aspire to ultimate authority.

It is claimed, moreover, that *Ulysses* "paradoxically" brings us closer to life. At various points Kenner's suggestion, that Bloom's pain at Molly's adultery lies behind a host of stylistic distortions, is taken up and expanded. There may be something in this, but how such apparent mimeticism may be reconciled with the basically anti-mimetic drift of the rest of the argument is not clear. In the end it is the force of modern linguistic anxieties and not the rich sentimentality of *Ulysses* that will leave the strongest impression on any reader of this account. But that is not such a bad thing, for many forbidding problems are tackled here that propagandists for Joyce's "humanity" leave unexplored.

Riggan's book is straightforward, and will be useful to students, particularly of comparative literature. But his notion of a cosy alliance between reader and "implied author" and his tendency to look both slightly quaint at a time when so many critics are questioning the reliability of all narrative - fictional, first-person or otherwise.

Introducing *The Gothic Novel 1790-1830: Plot Summaries and Index to Motifs* (216pp, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, \$14.00 1981 1997 0), Ann Tracy apologizes for the "unpleasant lightness of tone" in many of her 208 plot summaries. It is hard to remain too straight-faced about a book like *The Midnight Graven*, by Mary Meek: "Horatio has left home after being informed that Miranda, whom he loves, is his sister. Sheltering from a storm in a convent and ruined castle, he sees a ghost that leads him to a diamond ring and a putrefying female corpse. He finds himself looking for Fanny's Clegg, who discovers a secret assembly of men, Miranda's natural father presiding, who are dipping daggers into a bowl of blood."

The summaries of the novels form only a selection, and the most useful part of this book is probably its Index to motifs. This is intended for scholars with an interest in particular types of imagery, or who wish to see how a certain motif was used "before Coleridge or Scott or Keats ushered it into more high-brow company". The index is organized under headings like "obscure", "rattling of", "corpse in bed", and, of course, "incest".

Negatively questing

Raman Selden

HELENE L. BALDWIN

Samuel Beckett's Real Silence
171pp. Pennsylvania State University Press. £8.25.
0 271 00301 4

This book challenges the received view of Beckett as prophet of civilization's death throes. Helene Baldwin regards Beckett as a religious writer, who undertakes the "quest" for experience of the Absolute through the via negativa of Christian mysticism. The "negative way" of renunciation is compared with T. S. Eliot's affirmative route. The book painstakingly details the parallels between the landscapes, themes, and idiom of Beckett's middle period (from the trilogy to *Waiting for Godot*) and the poetry of Dante, Langland and Eliot. The writings of modern mystics (especially Simone Weil and Rudolph Otto) provide a contemporary gloss on Beckett's "quest".

The book enlarges our understanding of the Christian analogies of Beckett's work. However, valuable as this is, the conclusions drawn are questionable. In Christian mysticism God's arcaneness or seeming absence does not imply his non-existence, but we cannot deduce from this that Beckett's "nothingness" and "void" are for him too "the very Ground of Being". Neither does the "influence" of Dante, Langland and Eliot entail such ontological implications. Beckett's disgust at sexuality resembles Dante's but does not necessarily connote other-worldliness. Professor Baldwin is sometimes

dangerously tendentious, for example when she declares: "So much reliance on Dante's structure and imagery at the very least argues some interest in Dante's metaphysics." Beckett's interest in metaphysics is evident, but it is perhaps more reasonable to believe that his works are about the end of metaphysics. Baldwin argues that secular readings of Beckett ignore the richness and complexity of Beckett's Christian allusions by viewing them ironically or cynically. In my view, Beckett's position is neither "mystical" nor "nihilistic".

The following exchange occurs in *Waiting for Godot*:

Vladimir: What about trying them?
Estragon: I've tried everything.
Vladimir: I mean the boots.

Beckett here illustrates the pitfall all readers of his work can scarcely avoid. Everywhere we see the universal and the transcendental. Having the openness of a sacred text, his writings are often subjected to the reductive demands of allegory and exegesis. Beckett's M-character, it is urged, are embarking on a religious quest which "involves stripping away of possessions and eventually experiencing a mystical communion". Godot is God, and Vladimir and Estragon are the modern "faithful" who perform the minimum required of them (waiting). "This", we are to believe, "appears to be an accurate picture of the average man-in-the-street's relationship to God in his church."

The problem facing Beckett criticism has always been to elicit the precise significance of his cultural allusions. The novels and plays bear the weight of the cultural and

metaphysical accumulation of two thousand years. However, this "culture" is like the traces of ancient deposits and fossil remains. There is an emptying of meaning (not the same thing as nihilism); metaphysics suffers attenuation rather than ironic or cynical inversion. To suggest that the protagonists of *Godot* are "the typical theological illiterates of today" and that their tenuous grasp of the concept of repentance reflects "the confusion which today surrounds the whole notion of sin" is to attribute an oddly sanctimonious satirical intention to Beckett. It is more plausible to regard the "imprisonment of Christian culture" in the work of Beckett as elegiac rather than satiric or monitory. Theodor Adorno's account of the status of "thought" in Beckett seems more apt: "Beckett employs thoughts, *sans phrase*, as clichés, elements of the *monologue intérieur* which in his mind itself has been reduced, by the reified regression of culture." The Universe is no longer to be comprehended by the forms of philosophy and religion.

Professor Baldwin's argument is given a more persuasive force by the omission of Beckett's later work, from *Endgame* onwards. She argues that the writings of the period 1956-66 reveal an "increasing despair and nausea". Evidently, this stage can be subverted within a religious paradigm without difficulty. The enigma of Beckett cannot be solved by such a neat appropriation, such a comforting return to Being. However, the book establishes convincingly the pervasive presence of religious and metaphysical discourses in Beckett, and challenges the reader either to accept its allegory of the quest or to provide a more plausible reading.

Up from the basement

Peter Kemp

JOHN R. REED

The Natural History of H. G. Wells
294pp. Ohio University Press. £16.10.
0 8214 0628 0

"To lay down the main lines of Mr Wells's *Weltanschauung*", a critic wrote in 1926, "necessitates a bird's-eye view of a range of material appalling in its extent." By the time Wells died, twenty years after this, he had piled almost another fifty books on to the Himalayan heap. Miscellaneous as well as massive - science fiction, comic novels, history, utopias, text books, tracts untidily tumbled into a sprawling agglomeration - Wells's collected writings dauntingly discourage overall exploration. "We are, from the outset, fully conscious of the vastness of the subject and of the arduous task the completion of such a task will entail", dispiritedly remarked the Norwegian critic, Ingvald Rakneim, bracing himself to chart Wells's widespread oeuvre.

John R. Reed, in *The Natural History of H. G. Wells*, has also undertaken to survey all the writer's work, and has performed the task exceptionally clearly. Despite unevenness of quality and diversity of genre, Wells's writing, he contends, is unified by "a world view that remained coherent and mainly consistent". A series of perceptive chapters unravel what Reed sees as the key linking themes: "persistent motifs and recurrent ideas" such as liberation, nature, flesh and blood, identity, progress, organization, will. A concluding section assesses Wells's attitude towards, and achievements in, literary artistry.

While knowledgeably indicating differing intellectual influences on Wells, Reed makes the crucial point that his "world view was rooted in... private fears and desires". Many of these, it is rightly stressed, originated in the messy messiness of Wells's early life. His utopias, for instance, noticeably represent the opposite of the environment in which he grew up: the basement under the Bromley shop where, that was dark, cramped, disorganized, Wells's ideal States are light, spacious, orderly. In

imagination, he travels as far as possible from the rowdy underground confinement of his early life: something he encountered more instances of than Reed records - besides the basement, there were the subterranean servants' quarters at Up-park where he sometimes stayed with his mother, the "sort of vault underground" in which he ate when working in a drapery, and "the underground room" he lodged in as a student in London.

Reed does not always make as much as he might of those aspects of Wells's life which he sees as having shaped his writings and his thought; he virtually overlooks, for example, one of the most important factors - a childhood of near-malnutrition which left a lasting mark on Wells's imagination as well as his body. Noting that "Wells was an obsessive writer", Reed fails to document the most pervasive and colourful of his obsessions: a lifetime's preoccupation with food and eating, topics to which he invariably reacts with intense imaginative excitement.

As Reed indicates, Wells lays much stress on the fact that human beings are flesh and blood. What this book doesn't explore is the chief way he does this: by showing flesh being eaten and blood drunk. A remarkably high proportion of Wells's characters are eaten; a large number of others are bitten, nibbled, dribbled on, pecked, devoured, and generally subjected to hungry assault by predators ranging from homicidal orchids to voracious octopuses, from cannibals to carnivores, including giant beetles and an emu-sized chicken. The idea of humanity as provender fascinates Wells (as if in bizarre tribute to this, his fiction offers an impressive spread of characters with food-names - from *Amonillado* through to *Wensleydale*). And he is equally engrossed by the means by which it obtains its own provender. Wells's books devote lovingly extensive coverage to their characters' diets and eating habits - and the digestive difficulties that can follow. Mr Polly is a novel built around dyspepsia; the Invisible Man has problems with his see-through stomach (when he eats, the food remains inconspicuously visible until assimilated into his system). Concern with the culinary is so deeply and eccentrically embedded in Wells's imagination that it even extends to speculation about

the way he'd prefer to be cooked: as he makes clear in *Headsy*, he'd much rather be fried than boiled.

Sensibly noting the way *idées fixes* give Wells's work a real coherence despite its seeming diversity, Reed is less successful in demonstrating the inventive extravagance with which they are expressed. The result is to make Wells sound less exciting and more respectable than he actually is. This stands out most obviously, perhaps, in the section on Wells's attitude to women. Here, Reed pertinently draws attention to Wells's revelation, in his autobiography, that pubescent peering at loosely draped overalls, for example, one of the most important factors - a childhood of near-malnutrition which left a lasting mark on Wells's imagination as well as his body. Noting that "Wells was an obsessive writer", Reed fails to document the most pervasive and colourful of his obsessions: a lifetime's preoccupation with food and eating, topics to which he invariably reacts with intense imaginative excitement.

Professor Reed does a fine job in plotting Wells's chief preoccupations, tracking down key statements of them in even the most remote recesses of his oeuvre. The map he presents may be rather "joo" tidy and too pale to encompass all the giddy waywardness of Wells's imagination, but it is admirably lucid, precise and informatively detailed.

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Tainted legacies

Erik de Maunty

PHILIP SHORT

The Dragon and the Bear: Inside China and Russia Today
519pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £10.95.
0 340 25458 0

Stalin died on March 5, 1953, and Mao Zedong just over twenty-three years later, on September 9, 1976. Their shadows still loom over the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, and in *The Dragon and the Bear*, Philip Short has set out to chronicle the struggle of their successors to deal with the tainted legacy of terror and repression which they left behind them.

Mr Short is admirably equipped for the task, having spent some seven years reporting for the BBC on the two great Communist rivals, first in Moscow from 1974 to 1976, and then as the Corporation's first Peking correspondent from 1977 to 1981. He is also that best kind of foreign correspondent: one who feels a deep sympathy for the people and the territory he is covering, yet who never forsakes a cool objectivity in assessing their triumphs and tragedies, the latter unfortunately forming the dominant theme.

Kremlinology is a notoriously tricky pseudo-science, but Pekinology makes it look almost easy by comparison. The point is, of course, that the two Communist Parties - Soviet and Chinese, are both trying to do the impossible. When Stalin died, he was plotting a graceful new purge, which would almost certainly have returned the last of the Communist old guard, as well as a few million others. When Mao died, he had already lapsed into senile dementia, and his actress wife, Jiang Qing, and the so-called "Gang of Four" were perfectly happy to carry on the hatchet work on his behalf. The problem for the heirs and successors in both countries has been to suggest that their excesses were simply aberrations from a basically sound system, known in the Soviet Union as following the true Leninist path, and in China, rather more cumbersome, as Marxism-Leninism.

Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought.

So there are many ugly and instructive parallels to be observed in tracing the process of de-Stalinization on one hand, and de-Maoization on the other. But there are also many startling differences as well, deriving from the very different historical and cultural backgrounds of the two great Communist powers. When Lenin and his supporters triumphed in the October Revolution, they inherited an almost unbroken tradition of autocracy, only marginally modified by the efforts, between the two upheavals of 1905 and 1917, to create a broadly-based parliamentary democracy. In China, the dead hand of the past manifested itself in the form of feudalism. Both régimes are still shackled by survivals from their autocratic and feudal past, and both have succeeded in spawning a monstrous horde of petty tyrants and jack-in-office, making it difficult to decide which of the two huge bureaucracies is the more stifling and oppressive (on balance, Short awards the palm to the Chinese).

But this is not, of course, the only point of resemblance. It is fascinating to compare Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in his "Secret" speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, with the repudiation - of Mao's Cultural Revolution at the Third Plenum of the Chinese Party and at the Chinese Central Committee conference on theory a few weeks later. Yet if Khrushchev produced the more fiery oratory, it was the Chinese reforming faction, led by Deng Xiaoping, who took the more radical line in fighting by Mao. Khrushchev opened up many of the camps of the Soviet Gulag, tens of thousands of Stalin's victims were rehabilitated; but he could not bring himself to clear any of the major figures of the great Moscow show trials, not even Bukharin. By contrast, Mao's death was soon followed by a campaign to bring back from their prisons and places of exile all those whom he had punished for those whose names he had cleared. By contrast, Mao's death was soon followed by a campaign to bring back from their prisons and places of exile all those whom he had punished for those whose names he had cleared.

One would have liked to know more about how Mr Short and his family coped with life in Peking. There are a few personal interludes, as when he describes having dinner with two Chinese students, who were later warned to break off all contact with foreigners. One wonders how and where they met. But this is a minor criticism. As Mr Short remarks in his opening chapter, "There are more misconceptions about China than any other country on earth." The great merit of *The Dragon and the Bear* is that it manages to dispel so many of them.

Sharing loneliness in Babel

Victoria Glendinning

PENELOPE GILLIATT

Quotations From Other Lives
160pp. Secker and Warburg. £6.95.
0 436 17593 2

On a quick first reading Penelope Gilliatt's latest stories seem incoherent. Undoubtedly, they are lucid, well-crafted, deliberate: the apparent incoherence comes from a startling rejection of one of the cozier assumptions of short-story writers, that a situation or incident is to be captured and given meaning in isolation, by exclusion of the sounds of other voices in other rooms. Penelope Gilliatt's characters live fontaineau in the global village, or in Babel, inventing to belong somewhere and finding a frail security, or an imperfect love, in arbitrary encounters. In "When Are You Going Back?" an American girl in London, feeling excluded by the "ungentle" British and their well-bred silences, feels suddenly happier in a Pakistani restaurant with a dancer she met in a ship who is actually working as a writer (all the while, "unfriendly" men in these stories spend a lot of time not doing the thing they were trained for). In the polyglot restaurant, "languages got mixed in her ears."

I take the first paragraph of the first story, "Break," which sets the atmosphere for them all:

Alastair Brown's Scots ancestors had leapt over the Roman Wall to the North of England many centuries ago, but his later ancestors must have been as restless as in Scotland, for in the fifteenth century a line of them had fled to what is now Czechoslovakia. Alastair, a Czech child in the nineteenth-thirties times of anti-Semitism, had extremely formally told his family and friends that he was now to be called Eli. He wished to belong.

This particular hybrid qualifies in law and medicine at Oxford and in New York, and is his "own man." He falls in love thanks to an error: the woman is directed to the wrong surgery and never should have come to him at all. Mistaken identity is also the key to luck in "Fink", in which an English MP of Polish name and origin is invited back to his home village to be feted and honoured. Small wonder that he cannot remember anyone: he is the wrong man. No one minds. Poles and Czechs abound in these pages, presumably because, as the MP says, "In Poland, everything is arbitrary. We've been used as a corridor for so long."

There are urgent communications scattered through these tales like notices in a surreal railway station. "Exits important. Cleave to choice." Perhaps that's also why there are so many cats around. "The cat sat daintily, poised for exit, watching." Penelope Gilliatt's people keep their balance by listening to music - mostly "early music", played on a clavichord, but also, in a dentist's surgery, John Cage - and by using old adages, newspaper headlines, proverbs, as points of reference. There are "words in the air" in Babel, and one story is set at a meeting of a Christmas-cracker company, thinking up new - or rather old - riddles and nothings. "It's not the thought, it's the words that count."

Food counts too. In more than one story, people irrationally stock up with chocolate bars like emergency rations, as if for a Himalayan expedition. A great many meals are described and eaten and washed up; garlic seems to have a significance beyond the usual.

Those that cling to their original roots - structures in reduced circumstances in English country houses, for example - find coherence no more easily. Mothers die, or run away. "In Trust", which is written as a playlet, has a girl who is bullied by her grandparents all through her childhood into accepting that their beautiful old house in a London square is her sacred

heritage, to be cherished and preserved when they are gone. When inflation makes them change their tune for their own convenience, it is the girl who, uncomprehending, is betrayed.

Very old people play a large part. One arbitrary but temporarily happy conjunction is between a doddering professor and a nineteen-year-old student; elsewhere octogenarian lovers who have fretted for years against circumstances are presented with the possibility of being together. Living with someone, for most of Penelope Gilliatt's people, is just about as painful as separation, especially for the old who remember only the language of complaint and compromise.

But loneliness is the shared terror.

Saved by M'Gill

Lindsay Duguid

IAN J. BURTON

All Along the Skyline
163pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£6.95.
0 297 78143 X

All Along the Skyline is the third novel by a former labourer whose first book, *Out of Season*, became a New Fiction Society Choice. Which may or may not indicate that this is a work that should be taken seriously. In addition to its literary claims, *All Along the Skyline* makes a bid for attention by dealing with the subjects of unemployment and urban blight.

The book describes ten days in the life of Jack, an out-of-work lorry driver, who lives in a tower block in a corefully unspecified provincial town with his wife and son. Much of his life is the stuff of the social worker's case

When in "Seven O'Clock of a Strange Millennium" an aged man pursues the aged husband of his next mistress, and the plot miscarries, and everyone is writhing with stomach pains as in the last act of *Hamlet*, it is the end that they all worry about, and all three share the bill from the social worker for his food and cat-litter. "The cat seems in love and cat-litter," a puzzled policeman says, and is told: "Loneliness can't be ignored, can it? Isolation being another matter, because often chosen."

Penelope Gilliatt is funny about her deaf geriatric lovers, as she is about upper-class English people and horrible dinner parties, but I don't think it is for their social observation that those stories are chiefly valuable.

sheet: he suffers from a sense of hopelessness as a result of being downgraded, then losing his job; he finds himself unable to talk to his teenage son Gary and he is needlessly afraid that his wife Audrey will leave him for someone else. He also experiences various forms of alienation from the psychiatric case-ahoe: he hears voices, has a fear of an all-powerful bureaucracy (the Council Housing Department is convincingly presented as fearsome), feels that he has taken a wrong turning, is living the wrong life, and so on. Jack's thoughts and feelings, which take up most of the novel, are presented against a background of tower blocks with broken lifts, graffiti, litter, bomb sites and muggers; he also lives through a series of nightmare encounters with officious, faceless personnel in offices who try to convince him that Audrey should have married someone else. These "interviews", which take place at night, are neither fantasy nor allegory; they convey a certain menace, they do not quite achieve their aim as a measure of Jack's hopelessness.

In any case, before too long Jack finds the promise of future happiness. He discovers that he can talk to Gary about his favourite pop singer M'Gill; he makes friends with a young man called Joe and realizes that he has not lost his skill at lending motor-bikes. Finally he drives a lorry to London to one of M'Gill's concerts and forges a new doctrine of self reliance out of the songs he hears and the brightly dressed young people that he sees. Even the Housing Department turns up trumps, offering to rehouse the family near some green fields. Gary leaves home to live with his new girlfriend and Jack writes "I love you" on the misted up window of the new house (love in this case also means being able, since you have now got back your self-respect, to tell your wife not to be so bloody ally).

This overworked and difficult symbolism is not helped by the hand-drawn style of Burton's style. The odd, unrhymed prose flattens out into "human interest" of the sort: "His thoughts imploded, spiralled back inside him with the last, vanishing of mist snaking around a new street corner"; "He lay still and remembering, a faint smile on his lips."

Burton writes some very bad sentences, but when he goes for the result is even less happy. "The room was silent and dark and the beginning to show"; "Street leading to the bistro, dressed in dark velvet and waiting"; "His dialogue, too, rings false"; "Look, somehow I've got this comic fit for Sunday. I'm glad to see London, see? Couldn't give me a hand with the car, could you?" Awkwardness of narrative technique may be evidence of the author's sincerity, but it impairs a dreamer which neither the socially committed nor the literary minded will find attractive.

Yet how curiously Creed writes: he deftly places a scene, but can't let well alone, so buries it under a series of words: "Then from the self behind her closed eyes, up out of the seething, giving love of their bodies the work swirled untouching, running on the tide of the physical joy. . . . Such attempts at rapturous density of expression lurch if he found out that 'He realized that if he found out that she was involved in some serious act of terrorism - was involved without doubt and provably and still stoppably - and so forth. Such awkwardness is not enough, but the language is too promises psychological subtleties that Creed cannot provide. "She felt her heart lift a little because everything was progressing according to expectation and the operation could continue and unfolded and lived." "Unfolded and lived" has a fine Jannetian resonance; opening a space that M'Gill would fill nicely.

Travellers in an Antique Land however, is a modest book and not a pretentious one. The surface is unremarkable but vividly tells the story of the attempt at a profound and double crime and, in order to carry out her plan, makes contact with Khaled, a terrorist leader. Her desire dovetails with a plan of his own, and so she assists her. Attracted by his cool fanaticism, Tagarid becomes more deeply involved in his violent activities than she had originally intended. Keeping a watchful and amorous eye on her is Matt Curran, who, while posing as a businessman, is (surprise) a British agent.

As a tale of intrigue and terrorism, *Travellers in an Antique Land* is reasonably successful. The plot is thin, but the small cast of characters is drawn with skill and economy; they may be types, but they have sufficient individuality not to become stereotypes. The intrusion of Matt's love for Tagarid into their professional and political relationship is well depicted, and her intense attraction to Khaled does not, mercifully, lead to the standard torrid affair. Creed has a keen sense of place, and conveys the danger and the atmosphere as well as the physical features of the Lebanese towns and countryside. (He slips, though, when he invents a nineteenth-century Cistercian abbey, which will make architectural historians sit up.)

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Many writers in English are capable of that, and of little else. Most from comforts and amuses by imposing some sort of order - even order of a perverse kind - on the chaos of experience. These stories face this uncannily and head on, which is why they seem at first incoherent.

Quotations From Other Lives stick to a provocative book, even if you do have to strain your ears to pick up what is going on in the hubbub of history and accident, silence: "I mean, you let a conversation go off the rails and there are casualties and people getting killed because the carriage goes off their sides by then and you don't have the slightest idea how to hold them together and the hell with it."

All this material is treated with great care. The narrative offers differing points of view; the chapters consist alternating day-time and night-time views of the city; there are tele-titles in italics embedded in the text - newspaper headlines, television announcements and pop songs (most of these are very convincing parodies). There is a plethora of linked lists: clocks, numbers, parallel last corridors and coloured lights. M'Gill is a Messiah figure whose song lyrics are based on the poems of William Blake. It is he who rouses Jack with Audrey and Gary and provides him with a reason for living. Can there be any significance in the fact that M'Gill appears to have been murdered by fans for trying out a new kind of music on Good Friday but wins them back with the concert he gives on Easter Sunday?

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LITERARY CRITICISM

A seventeenth-century feminist poet

Ruth Perry

Her sympathy I can controul
Who falsely say that women have no soul.

These lines, part of a four-stanza poem by the late seventeenth-century feminist Mary Astell, have only just been identified after lying nearly 300 years in the Bodleian Library. Having worked on the biography of this writer for more than five years, during which time I have painstakingly collected a few letters, poems, and notes from private collections to various corners of England, I was astonished to find this now manuscript source right under my nose in Bodley. It is listed as MS. Rawl. Poet. 154 - "A Collection of Poems, chiefly religious, dedicated to Archbishop Sancroft, 1689. By a Lady, M.A." - and has not been identified before as the work of any particular "Lady". The manuscript consists of eighty-seven pages of poetical specimens, written on heavy cream-coloured gilt-edged paper, 8 inches by 11½ inches, with red-inked one-inch margins. It contains fifteen poems carefully penned in a round even hand, fully by Mary Astell. They are in her handwriting and they employ phrases commonly found in her prose.

Mary Astell was a polemicist on the issue of women's intellectual rights. She is best known today for her first book, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), which describes

the need for institutions of higher learning for women, residential colleges where single gentlewomen could find a home and where "hunted heresses" could find a refuge. Her "sublime" correspondence with the learned John Norris was published in 1695, and widely admired. After that, she wrote five books and two long pamphlets on feminist, philosophical, and topical subjects. She was well known to her literary contemporaries: Defoe, Swift, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Elizabeth Elstob, Richard Steele.

The date on the prefatory note to these poems establishes that Astell came to London much earlier than scholars have hitherto thought, and that she had a difficult time surviving in the metropolis. By 1688 she was so destitute and desperate that she threw herself upon the charity of William Sancroft, the non-juring Archbishop who had refused to read James II's Declaration of Indulgence to the metropolis. By 1690, with five of his bishops and 400 lesser clergy, been deprived of his position in the established church. Sancroft must have helped the young woman, for in 1699 she presented him with this handsome booklet of her poems, and the covering letter in which she thanks the good man for the "condescension and Candor with which your Grace was pleased to receive a poor unknown, who hath no place to fly unto and none that careth for my Soul, when even my Kinkfol had failed and my familiar Friends had forgotten me . . ."

Venerating the monument

Brian Vickers

LAWRENCE DANSON (Editor)

On King Lear
185pp. Guildford: Princeton
University Press. £10.50.
0 91 06477 6

For a number of the critics assembled by Lawrence Danson *King Lear* has the status of a holy book, before which we bow in homage or strains to the heights of eloquence. This collection in fact consists of lectures given over a short period of time, 1978-79, by members of one institution, the English department at Princeton. For a department to produce eight good lectures on a major work would be a considerable achievement, and some, in their palmy years, might have pulled it off. But this collection is disappointing: the cohesion that comes from contributors working together of repetition, overlapping, and mutual praise (embarrassing tributes to each other that ought to have been edited out). Further, not many of the essays give the sense of a critic having something new, or pressing, to communicate. Alvin B. Kernan relates *Lear* to the Shakespearean Pageant of History, or economic and social background, compiling a rather stale mosaic of quotations (Crittwell, Tillyard, Hill, Stone) and in one place assigning Coriolanus to the Roman cavalry ("the content for the weakness of others of a man on horseback like Coriolanus"). G.E. Bentley repeats what he has said before, and better, on Shakespeare as a unique man of the theatre; Thomas McFarland starts from Laing's *Politics of Experience*, but in trying to prove the play's relevance or modernity he reduces it to the commonplace of everyday life: "Lear's pain and outrage are larger versions" of the suffering that "almost all parents" experience; Lear's desire not to stay to join for dinner is "the experience of untold numbers of housewives and ageing parents writ large", while those who have had sympathy with Coriolanus' impatience with Lear and his knights. Surely Princeton undergraduates do not need to be talked down to?

What is new in this volume, or at least derives from a critical fashion of the last decade, is a concern with

"drama as theatre". That seemingly redundant formula marks a concern with the actor, trying to turn his experience in acting the role into a privileged comment on the play. This is not the same as reading the memoirs of Mrs Siddons, or Sir John Gielgud, or a New Theory, with its New Jargon. Michael Goldman's essay on "Acting and Fooling" discusses "historical imagery", that is, the "motifs of enactment" made by the actor, a slightly grandiose phrase for the conversion of a script into a performance. The new critical technique is to work back from the performance to what is going on in the actor's mind:

Trained actors usually learn a variety of techniques for sustaining exact and vivid emotion in scenes of demanding intensity. One technique is to focus on a particular object. If the actor feels in danger of losing an emotion or falsifying it, he may single out a button, say, or a chair, or an eyebrow and make it the recipient of his emotion. He may direct his emotion toward the object, or find his emotion by reacting to it. In *King Lear* Shakespeare has written this technique into the title role. Repeatedly, at moments of emotional intensity, Lear will focus closely on a specific point - on an area of the body and its sensation or

No one who knows Astell's prose works will be surprised by the content of her verso. The lines quoted above come from a poem called "Ambition", which is about her unquenchable urge to greatness only made fiercer by a proper womanly modesty. She must have written it when she was about eighteen, at the time she left her native Newcastle for Chelsea to follow a literary career.

Between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three she dedicated herself with pious fervour to right living and holy thinking, and prepared herself for ostracism by the wits and gossips of the city and for ill success in the materialistic world. The surprise is rather that Astell wrote so many and such elaborate poems, for until now she has been known only for her prose tracts. These poems are rare, perhaps unique, in seventeenth-century English poetry, for they show Astell's intellectual interests and her articulate feminism. In one poem, for example, she notes that although her longing for self-sacrifice suggested missionary work to her, it was barred to her because of her sex:

How shall I be Peter or Paul?
That to the Turk and Infidel,
I might the joyful tidings tell,
And spare no labour to convert them all?

But alas my Sex denies me this,
And May's Privilege I cannot wish.
Yet hark I hear my dearest Savior say,
They are more blessed who his Word obey.

The echo of Milton's sentiment

"They also serve who only stand and wait" in the last couplet can be trusted. Astell read and admired his work and quoted him frequently. His influence on those poems is apparent elsewhere too, as in the twenty-page-long "Death" which begins by dramatizing the garden of Eden, the Temptation, and the Fall. But the more openly acknowledged debt in Astell's verse is to Abraham Cowley, whom like many of her contemporaries, Astell ranked far above Milton. Several of these poems are framed as answers to certain of Cowley's poems ("The Motto", "The Wish") and she also uses the so-called "pindaric" stanza of end-rhymed iambic lines of unequal length. They imitate his subject matter as well, and like his poems those are personal lyrics about love, friendship, and dedication to a poetic ideal. Taken together, they constitute a symbolic pledge to poetry of a religious turn, the consecration of her neoclassical taste and intent to what was for her the highest subject, the love of God:

Thou thy Thymasus be thence learn
thy Song,
Thy Saviour's side shall be thy Delicium.

These poems have been preserved all these years among Dr Sancroft's papers simply as remarkable instances of poems written "By a Lady". To look at them now, knowing that Mary Astell wrote them, is to enlarge our understanding of her sensibility and simultaneously to enrich our knowledge of English poetry of the late seventeenth century.

essay to confront the tragic issue in a sustained manner is by Thomas P. Roche, which starts from that difficult phrase: "Nothing almost sees miracles", and delivers a timely attack on the idea of tragic knowledge, those compensatory insights into suffering that supposedly redeem the tragic hero, and reconcile him to his fate. Roche easily shows how irrelevant this idea is to the experience of the main tragic heroes, yet his own idea that *Lear* is meant to depict the plight of man before the Christian era, that is, before the salvation of man by Christ's sacrifice was available, is an unconvincing alternative. The fact that the suffering in *King Lear* occurs in a pre-Christian context (in the setting of the play), does not mean that it longs for redemption. Roche rightly notes the lack of consolation at the end: "The ending of *Lear* is as bleak and unwondering as man can reach outside the gates of hell". But the meaning of words of literature does not reside solely in their conclusion. In the whole of the play there are many counterbalancing movements to the evil and destructiveness of Lear, Gloucester, Goneril, Regan, Edmund and Cornwall: the tragedy is that they arrive too late to prevent suffering and death. The conclusion also vindicates Edgar, Cordelia and Kent: whatever goes on in hell, at least, good is upheld.

The most depressing aspect of this collection is the sense these Princeton professors give that *King Lear* is an assured monument, not a painful and uncomfortable experience that shakes out of our preconceived ideas about the rights of parents, or the value of families, or states. Hardly any of them become involved with the experience of tragedy. Theodore Weiss, in an overwrought and badly rhetorical essay, refers dismissively to Tolstoy's criticism, yet one could wish that some of these critics cared as deeply as Tolstoy did, right or wrong. The only

High hypochondria

Pat Rogers

ALLAN INGRAM
Boswell's Creative Gloom: A Study of Imagery and Melancholy in the Writings of James Boswell
219pp. Macmillan. £20.
0 333 29476 9

Allan Ingram has written the fullest account to date of Boswell's depressive temperament, as revealed in his writing - chiefly, that is, in the private journals and in the newspaper column called *The Hypochondriack*. There is a workmanlike chapter on the published *Life of Johnson*, with apt commentary on "the atmosphere of coarseness on which pervades the book" and on the occasions when Boswell allows himself the last word: Dr Ingram does not get

so far with the *Tour to the Hebrides*, whilst the *Account of Corsica* is pretty well left aside.

In essence this is a psychological reading, with heavy reliance on imagery as a clue to the workings of Boswell's mind. It could also be in some sense a contribution to biographic understanding, but Ingram does not date quotations and seems to wish to deflect such on approach. He draws on Freud, Sartre, Foucault and R. D. Laing: the relation of these secondary authorities to the argument is sometimes oblique, as on page 102, where Freud's very specific point is not quite identical with the one on which Ingram proceeds to elaborate.

The Boswell presented in these pages is a tortured individual, flailing off madness and living "one step away from life in a limbo where the real world exists in phantom form". There

In the act

John Stachniewski

JAMES E. HIRSCH

The Structure of Shakespearean Scenes
230pp. Yale University Press. £12.60.
0 300 02650 1

This scene, doated like the French classical theatre's act or the interval between stage clearances, is, Hirsch argues, Shakespeare's largest structural unit. Folio act divisions, sometimes so inept that characters are left on stage during the break, are mainly editorial, conforming to the fashion which prevailed from about 1616. The earlier, quarto editions lack act divisions as do most extant editions of plays written for the public theatres between 1583 and 1616. Prompt books, on the other hand, rule lines in their plot summaries wherever the stage is cleared of characters. And Shakespeare very frequently signals scene endings with rhymed couplets or obvious exit lines, or heralds new scenes with, for instance, *Misc's Labour's Lost* is vandalized by act divisions which cut across its careful scenic alternations between main and sub plot.

On the solidly constructed argumentative platform adumbrated here Hirsch erects a systematic classification of scenes which yields illuminating discussion of uses to which particular scene types are put, their internal symmetries, and their reciprocity with homomorphic scenes in the same play. Some of his best points concern scenes whose "segments" correspond to the French scene, which mark my change in the composition of characters on stage) are but tenuously related since these test the hypothesis that action between stage clearances forms a structural unit. In the best scene of *The Winter's Tale*, for example, Shakespeare adds to his interrogation of theatrical conventions by leaving on stage, one presumes, a mere doll, representing the baby Perdita, to connect up his two segments. Hirsch points out the way the segments nicely complement each other in substance and pattern: dialogue giving way to Antigonus's soliloquy is for instance counterpointed by the Shepherd's soliloquy and further dialogue. In the scene of Falstaff's feigned death in *Henry IV, Part One* Shakespeare again assumes familiarity with Hirsch's definition (corpses, as Hirsch has observed, can remain on stage between scenes).

In order to create the stunning effect of Falstaff's resurrection, Shakespeare has led us to believe Falstaff is dead, and this effect is enhanced by our further erroneous assumption that the scene has ended. And the return of the seemingly dead Falstaff extends the life of the seemingly defunct scene.

As well as removing acts Hirsch needs to reorganize some traditional scene divisions. The one that seals off Romeo and Juliet's balcony dialogue from the just departed Benvolio and Mercutio violates his criterion: since Romeo has remained on stage, Hirsch is surely right to erase this division. There would be no point in Romeo's hidden presence were not his allies' voices intended to echo through the love talk, contaminating it with the reminder of loyalties and perspectives he neglects.

Insights in this book are liberal and authentic. Exemplification of its weaknesses would seem to magnify them and they therefore need not be mentioned. Hirsch proves the truthfulness of Empson's observation, in 1935, of the Elizabethan drama's "system of construction by scenes". He benefits, too, from his most notable forerunner, Emrys Jones's *Scene Form in Shakespeare*, which more probably but less comprehensively demonstrated how "scene paradigms can act as a matrix for new narrative material". To focus on the structure of scenes is to reduce the gap between criticism of the plays and their theatrical impact while demystifying the actual processes of creation. Hirsch's proposals, scene divisions challenge to reply from Shakespearean editors.

Short histories

Savkar Altinel

JOHN JAKES

North and South

740pp. Collins. £8.95.
0 00 22267 3

In 1686 two immigrants newly arrived in America pass one another in a street in Charles Town, Carolina. A century and a half later two of their descendants, Northerner George Hazard and Southerner Orry Main, meet as cadets at West Point and become firm friends. John Jakes's long but extremely readable novel deals with the lives of the wealthy and powerful Hazard and Main families during the twenty years preceding the South's secession from the Union. Two more volumes, covering the Civil War and the Reconstruction, are promised and should be well worth waiting for.

AILEEN CRAWLEY

The Shadow of God

330pp. Hutchinson. £7.95.
0 199 14763 5

Turkey in the early sixteenth century: Suleiman the Magnificent, having just assumed power, dreams of military victories and administrative reforms, while his favourite wife Khurum wants to ensure that none of her rivals' children will succeed to the throne, and his best friend Ibrahim nurses ambitions of becoming Grand Vizier. The plot moves along briskly, taking in the siege of Rhodes, the subduing of Egypt and the janissary mutiny of 1526, as well as all the intrigues behind the scenes, and the three young protagonists, who were eventually to preside over the heyday of the Ottoman Empire, are portrayed with sympathy and humour.

TOM GIBSON

A Soldier of India
288pp. Robert Hale. £7.25.
0 709 19686 5

In the summer of 1857 Captain Mortin Lalor is ordered to accompany visiting East India Company Director Sir Julian Wrenthorpe and his daughter Alicia on their tour of the central provinces of the sub-continent, and thus finds himself in the cantonment of Jhansi at the time of the Mutiny. When he and Alicia are rescued from the rebellious sepoys by a local Hindu princess, a love triangle is formed, and the English girl, motivated by her jealousy of the native woman, accuses Lalor of treason after the uprising is over. An excellent novel which combines high adventure with a thoughtful examination of the meaning of loyalty.

DUDLEY POPE

Admiral
310pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.50.
0 436 37743 8

Ned Yorke, Dudley Pope's Royalist hero who became a buccaneer after losing his plantation on Barbados to the Roundheads, here decides to stick to the seafaring life despite the Restoration, and chooses to serve the new King by leading his fellow-buccaneers on an expedition against the Spanish "the like of which the West Indies has never seen before". Fast-moving, a frigate in full sail and colourful as a Caribbean sunset.

RICHARD WOODMAN

A King's Cutter
170pp. John Murray. £7.50.
0 7195 3946 3

In this second Nathaniel Drinkwater adventure, the young sailor, back in the Navy in time for the Napoleonic wars, takes part in secret operations off the French coast, uncovers plots by

enemy agents, and is ultimately instrumental in the winning of the Battle of Camperdown. The author's knowledge of maritime matters, which was praised by *Lloyd's List*, is indeed formidable, but one cannot help wishing he would also try harder to generate suspense and tension.

Leonardo Sciascia's *Candido, or A Dream Dreamed in Sicily*, a story of conflicting ideologies - those of Church and Party - in post-war Sicily, which was first published in Italian in 1977, was reissued earlier this year in an English translation by Adrienne Foulke (132pp. Carcanet New Press. £5.95. 85635 404X).

Vengeance and vigilance

Stephen Brook

DAVID CREED

Travellers in an Antique Land
215pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.
0 436 11413 5

The political thriller, which depends on a high degree of naturalism, exists in uneasy relation to real life, the one sometimes preempting the other. *Travellers in an Antique Land*, David Creed's sixth novel, is set in Lebanon, and what has happened there in recent weeks outstrips even his alert sense of tension and suffering in that country.

The action takes place in post-civil war days, and consequently the PLO and Israel barely get a mention. The rival groups battling it out on the streets of Beirut and the villages beyond are Lebanese (Christian, Druze, Muslim) and Syrians, who are seen as a ruthless and cynical army of occupation. In the opening pages, a seemingly apolitical doctor is brutally murdered by two Syrian soldiers, one of whom also rapes his beautiful wife Tagarid. She vows to avenge the

double crime and, in order to carry out her plan, makes contact with Khaled, a terrorist leader. Her desire dovetails with a plan of his own, and so she assists her. Attracted by his cool fanaticism, Tagarid becomes more deeply involved in his violent activities than she had originally intended. Keeping a watchful and amorous eye on her is Matt Curran, who, while posing as a businessman, is (surprise) a British agent.

As a tale of intrigue and terrorism, *Travellers in an Antique Land* is reasonably successful. The plot is thin, but the small cast of characters is drawn with skill and economy; they may be types, but they have sufficient individuality not to become stereotypes. The intrusion of Matt's love for Tagarid into their professional and political relationship is well depicted, and her intense attraction to Khaled does not, mercifully, lead to the standard torrid affair. Creed has a keen sense of place, and conveys the danger and the atmosphere as well as the physical features of the Lebanese towns and countryside. (He slips, though, when he invents a nineteenth-century Cistercian abbey, which will make architectural historians